



Collected Poems and Plays

SRI AUROBINDO

Vol. II.

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**COLLECTED POEMS
AND PLAYS
VOL. II.**

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VIKRAMORVASIE
or
The Hero and the Nymph

A DRAMA BY KALIDASA
Translated from the Sanskrit

CHARACTERS

PURURAVAS	..	..	Son of Budha and Ila, grandson of the Moon, King of the world, reigning at Pratisthana.
MANAVAKA		..	A Brahmin, the King's jester and companion.
LATAVYA	..	..	Chamberlain of the King's seraglio.
CHITRARATH	..	..	King of the Gandharvas, musicians of Heaven.
GALAVA	..	..	} Disciples of Bharat, Preceptor of the Arts in Heaven.
PELAVA	..	..
AYUS	..	..	Son of Pururavas.
CHARIOTEER	..	..	Of Pururavas.
THE QUEEN AUSHINARIE			Wife of Pururavas and daughter of the King of Kashi.
URVASIE	..	..	An Apsara or Nymph of Heaven, born from the thigh of Narayan.
NIPUNIKA	..	..	The Queen's handmaid.
CHITRALEKHA		..	} Nymphs of Heaven, companions of Urvsie.
SAHAJANYA	..	..
RAMBHA	..	..
MENAKA	..	..
SATYAVATIE	..	..	A hermitess.

A Huntress.

Girls, attendant on the King; Amazons.

VIKRAMORVASIE

or

The Hero and the Nymph

ACT I

INVOCATION

HE in Vedanta by the Wise pronounced
Sole Being, who the upper and under world
Pervading overpasses, whom alone
The name of God describes, here applicable
And pregnant—crippled else of force, to others
Perverted—and the Yogins who aspire
To rise above the human death, break in
Breath, soul and senses passionately seeking
The Immutable, and in their own hearts find—
He, easily by work and faith and love
Attainable, ordain your heavenly weal.

After the invocation the Actor-Manager speaks.

MANAGER

No need of many words.

He speaks into the greenroom.

Hither, good friend.

The Assistant-Manager enters.

ASSISTANT

Behold me.

MANAGER

Often has the audience seen
Old dramas by our earlier poets staged;

Therefore today a piece as yet unknown
I will present them, Vikram and the Nymph.
Remind our actors then most heedfully
To *con* their parts, as if on each success
Depended.

ASSISTANT

I shall do so.

He goes.

MANAGER

And now to you,
O noble audience, I bow down and pray,
If not from kindness to us your friends
And caterers, yet from pride in the high name
That *faces* this our plot, heedful attention,
Gentles, to Vikramorvasie, the work
Of Kalidasa.

VOICES

Help! O help, help, help!
Whoever is on the side of Heaven, whoever
Has passage through the paths of level air.

MANAGER

What cry is this that breaks upon our prologue
From upper worlds, most like the wail distressed
Of ospreys, sad but sweet as moan of bees
Drunken with honey in deep summer bloom,
Or the low cry of distant cuckoo? or hear I
Women who move on Heaven's azure stage
Splendid with rows of seated Gods, and chant
In airy syllables a liquid sweetness?

(After some thought)

Ah, now I have it. She who from the thigh
Of the great tempted sage Narayan sprang
Radiant, Heaven's nymph, divinest Urvasie,
In middle air from great Coilasa's lord

Returning, to the enemies of Heaven
Is prisoner; therefore the sweet multitude
Of Apsaras send forth melodious cry
Of pathos and complaint.

He goes.

*The Nymphs of Heaven enter, Rambha, Menaka, Sahajanya and
many others.*

NYMPHS

Help, help, O help!

Whoever is on the side of Heaven, whoever
Has passage through the paths of level air.

*Pururavas enters suddenly and with speed in a chariot with his
charioteer.*

PURURAVAS

Enough of lamentation! I am here,
Ilian Pururavas, from grandiose worship
In Surya's brilliant house returned. To me,
O women! say 'gainst what ye cry for rescue.

RAMBHA

Rescue from Titan violence, O King.

PURURAVAS

And what has Titan violence to you
Immortal ~~done~~ of fault, O Heaven's women?

MENAKA

King, hear us.

PURURAVAS

Speak.

MENAKA

Our sister, our dear sister!

The ornament of Eden and its joy!
Whom Indra by asceticism alarmed
Made use of like a lovely sword to kill
Spiritual longings, the eternal refutation

Of Luxmie's pride of beauty, Urvasie!
Returning from Cuvera's halls, O she
Was met, was taken. Cayshy, that dire Titan,
Who in Hiranyapoor exalts his house,
Beheld her and in great captiving hands
Ravished, Chitralkha and Urvasie.
We saw them captive haled.

PURURAVAS

Say, if you know,
What region of the air received that traitor?

SAHAJANYA

North-east he fled.

PURURAVAS

Therefore expel dismay.
I go to bring you back your loved one, if
Attempt can do it.

RAMBHA

O worthy this of thee!
O from the Lunar splendour truly sprung!

PURURAVAS

Where will you wait my advent, nymphs of Heaven?

NYMPHS

Upon this summit called the Peak of Gold,
O King, we shall expect thee.

PURURAVAS

Charioteer,
Urge on my horses to the far north-east;
Gallop through Heaven like the wind.

CHARIOTEER

'Tis done.

PURURAVAS

O nobly driven! With speed like this I could
O'ertake Heaven's eagle though he fled before me

With tempest in his vans. How much more then
 This proud transgressor against Heaven's King!
 Look, charioteer, beneath my sudden car
 The crumbling thunder-clouds fly up like dust,
 And the wheels' desperate rotation seems
 To make another set of whirling spokes.
 The plumes upon the horses' heads rise tall,
 Motionless like a picture, and the wind
 Of our tremendous speed has made the flag
 From staff to airborne end straight as if pointing.
They go out in their chariot.

RAMBHA

Sisters, the King is gone. Direct we then
 Our steps to the appointed summit.

MENAKA

Hasten,

O hasten.

ALL

Hasten, O hasten, come, come, come.

They ascend the hill.

RAMBHA

And O, will he indeed avail to draw
 This stab out of our hearts?

MENAKA

Doubt it not, Rambha.

RAMBHA

No, Menaka, for not so easily
 Are Titans overthrown, my sister.

MENAKA

Rambha,

Remember this is he whom Heaven's King,
 When battle raised its dreadful face, has called
 With honour from the middle world of men,
 Set in his armed van, and conquered.

RAMBHA

Here too

I hope that he will conquer.

SAHAJANYA

Joy, sisters, joy!

Look where the chariot of the moon appears,
The Ilian's great deer-banner rushing up
From the horizon. He would not return
With empty hands, sisters. We can rejoice.

*All gaze upwards. Pururavas enters in his chariot with his
charioteer; Urvasie, her eyes closed in terror, supported on
the right arm of Chitralekha.*

CHITRALEKHA

Courage, sweet sister, courage.

PURURAVAS

O thou too lovely!

Recall thy soul. The enemies of Heaven
Can injure thee no more; that danger's over.
The Thunderer's puissance still pervades the worlds.
O then uplift these long and lustrous eyes
Like sapphire lilies in a pool where dawn
Comes smiling.

CHITRALEKHA

Why does she not yet, alas!

Recover her sweet reason? Only her sighs
Remind us she is living.

PURURAVAS

Too rudely, lady,

Has thy sweet sister been alarmed. For look!
What tremblings of the heart are here revealed.
Watch the quick rise and fall incessantly
That lift between these large magnificent breasts
The flowers of Eden.

CHITRALEKHA

Sister, O put by
This panic. Fie! thou art no Apsara.

PURURAVAS

Terror will not give up his envied seat
On her luxurious bosom soft as flowers;
The tremors in her raiment's edge and little
Heavings and flutterings between her two breasts
Confess him.

Urvasie begins to recover.

(With joy)

Thou art fortunate, Chitralekha!
Thy sister to her own bright nature comes
Once more. So have I seen a glorious night
Delivered out of darkness by the moon,
Nocturnal fire break through with crests of brightness
Its prison of dim smoke. Her beauty, waking
From swoon and almost rescued, to my thoughts
Brings Ganges as I saw her once o'erwhelmed
With roar and ruin of her banks, race wild,
Thickening, then gradually from that turmoil
Grow clear, emerging into golden calm.

CHITRALEKHA

Be glad, my sister, O my Urvasie.
For vanquished are the accursed Titans, foes
Of the Divine, antagonists of Heaven.

URVASIE

(Opening her eyes)

Vanquished? By Indra then whose soul can see
Across the world.

CHITRALEKHA

Not Indra, but this King
Whose puissance equals Indra.

URVASIE

(*Looking at Pururavas*)

O Titans,

You did me kindness!

PURURAVAS

(*Gazing at Urvasie*)

And reason if the nymphs

Tempting Narayan Sage drew back ashamed
When they beheld this wonder from his thigh
Starting. And yet I cannot think of her
Created by a withered hermit cold:
But rather in the process beautiful
Of her creation Heaven's enchanting moon
Took the Creator's place, or very Love
Grown all one amorousness, or else the month
Of honey and its days deep-mined with bloom.
How could an aged anchoret, dull and stale
With poring over Scripture and oblivious
To all this rapture of the senses, build
A thing so lovely?

URVASIE

O my Chitralekha,

Our sisters?

CHITRALEKHA

This great prince who slew our fear
Can tell us.

PURURAVAS

Sad of heart they wait, O beauty!
For with thy sweet ineffugable eyes
Who only once was blessed, even he without thee
Cannot abstain from pining. How then these
Original affections sister-sweet
Rooted in thee?

URVASIE

How courteous is his tongue
And full of noble kindness! Yet what wonder?
Nectar is natural to the moon. O prince,
My heart's in haste to see once more my loved ones.

PURURAVAS

Lo, where upon the Peak of Gold they stand
Gazing towards thy face, and with such eyes
Of rapture as when men behold the moon
Emerging from eclipse.

CHITRALEKHA

O sister, see!

URVASIE

(Looking longingly at the King)

I do and drink in with my eyes my partner
Of grief and pleasure.

CHITRALEKHA

(With a smile; significantly)

Sister, who is he?

URVASIE

He? Oh! Rambha I meant and all our friends.

RAMBHA

He comes with victory. Urvasie's beside him
And Chित्रalekha. Now indeed this King
Looks glorious like the moon, when near the twin
Bright asterisms that frame best his light.

MENAKA

In both ways are we blest, our lost dear one
Brought back to us, this noble King returned
Unwounded.

SAHAJANYA

Sister, true. Not easily
Are Titans conquered.

PURURAVAS

Charioteer, descend.

We have arrived the summit.

CHARIOTEER

As the King

Commands.

PURURAVAS

O I am blest in this descent

Upon unevenness. O happy shock

That threw her great hips towards me. All her sweet shoulder
Pressed mine that thrilled and passioned to the touch.

URVASIE

(*Abashed*)

Move yet a little farther to your side,
Sister.

CHITRALEKHA

(*Smiling*)

I cannot; there's no room.

RAMBHA

Sisters,

This prince has helped us all. 'Twere only grateful
Should we descend and greet him.

ALL

Let us do it.

They all approach.

PURURAVAS

Stay, charioteer, the rush of hooves that she
Marrying her sweet-browed eagerness with these
May, mingling with their passionate bosoms, clasp
Her dearest like the glory and bloom of spring
Hastening into the open arms of trees.

NYMPHS

Hail to the King felicitous who comes
With conquest in his wheels.

PURURAVAS

To you, O nymphs,
As fortunate in your sister's rescued arms.
Urvasie descends from the chariot supported on Chitralekha's arm.

URVASIE

O sisters, sisters, take me to your bosoms.
All rush upon her and embrace her.
Closer, O closer! hurt me with your breasts!
I never hoped to see again your sweet
Familiar faces.

RAMBHA

Protect a million ages,
Monarch, all continents and every sea!

Noise within.

CHARIOTEER

My lord, I hear a rumour in the east
And mighty speed of chariots. Lo, one bright
With golden armlet, looming down from Heaven
Like a huge cloud with lightning on its wrist,
Streams towards us.

NYMPHS

Chitrarath! 'tis Chitrarath.

CHITRARATH

(Approaches the King with great respect)

Hail to the Indra-helper! Fortunate
Pururavas, whose prowess is so ample,
Heaven's King has grown its debtor.

PURURAVAS

The Gandharva!

Welcome, my bosom's friend.

They clasp each other's hands.

What happy cause

Of coming?

CHITRARATH

Indra had heard from Narad's lips
Of Urvasie by Titan Cayshy haled.
He bade us to her rescue. We midway
Heard heavenly bards chanting thy victory,
And hitherward have turned our march. On, friend,
With us to Maghavan and bear before thee
This lovely offering. Great thy service done
To Heaven's high King; for she who was of old
Narayan's chief munificence to Indra,
Is now thy gift, Pururavas. Thy arm
Has torn her from a Titan's grasp.

PURURAVAS

Comrade,

Never repeat it; for if we who are
On Heaven's side, o'erpower the foes of Heaven,
'Tis Indra's puissance, not our own. Does not
The echo of the lion's dangerous roar
Reverberating through the mountain glens
Scatter with sound the elephants? We, O friend,
Are even such echoes.

CHITRARATH

This fits with thy great nature,
For modesty was ever valour's crown.

PURURAVAS

Not now nor hence is't seasonable for me,
Comrade, to meet the King of Sacrifice.
Thou, therefore, to the mighty presence lead
This beauty.

CHITRARATH

As thou wilt. With me to Heaven!

URVASIE

(Aside to Chitrakleha)

I have no courage to address my saviour.

Sister, wilt be my voice to him?

CHITRALEKHA
(Approaching Pururavas)
My lord,

Urvasie thus petitions—

PURURAVAS
What commands

The lady?

CHITRALEKHA
She would have thy gracious leave
To bear into her far immortal Heavens
The glory of the great Pururavas
And dwell with it as with a sister.

PURURAVAS
(Sorrowfully)
Go then;

But go for longer meeting.

The Gandharvas and the nymphs soar up into the sky.

URVASIE
Sister, stay!
My chain is in this creeper caught. Release it.

CHITRALEKHA
(Looking at the King with a smile)
Oh, yes, indeed, a sad entanglement!
I fear you will not easily be loosed.

URVASIE
Do not mock me, sister. Pray you, untwine it.

CHITRALEKHA
Come, let me try. I'll do my possible
To help you.

She busies herself with the chain.

URVASIE
(*Smiling*)

Sister, think what thou hast promised
Even afterwards.

PURURAVAS
(*Aside*)

Creeper, thou dost me friendship;
Thou for one moment holdest from the skies
Her feet desirable. O lids of beauty!
O vision of her half-averted face!

*Urvasie, released, looks at the King, then with a sigh at her
sisters soaring up into the sky.*

CHARIOTEER
O King, thy shaft with the wild voice of storm
Has hurled the Titans in the salt far sea,
Avenging injured Heaven, and now creeps back
Into the quiver, like a mighty snake
Seeking its lair.

PURURAVAS
Therefore bring near the chariot,
While I ascend.

CHARIOTEER
'Tis done.

The King mounts the chariot.

PURURAVAS
Shake loose the reins.

URVASIE
(*Gazing at the King, with a sigh, aside*)
My benefactor! my deliverer!
Shall I not see thee more?

She goes out with Chitralekha.

PURURAVAS
(*Looking after Urvasie*)
O Love! O Love!

Thou mak'st men hot for things impossible
And mad for dreams. She soars up to the Heavens,
Her father's middle stride, and draws my heart
By force out of my bosom. It goes with her,
Bleeding, as when a wild swan through the sky
Wings far her flight, there dangles in her beak
A dripping fibre from the lotus torn.

They go.

ACT II

SCENE.—*Park of the King's Palace in Pratisthana.*—*In the background the wings of a great building, near it the gates of the park, near the bounds of the park an harbour and a small artificial hill to the side.*

Manavaka enters.

MANAVAKA

Houp! Houp! I feel like a Brahmin who has had an invitation to dinner; he thinks dinner, talks dinner, looks dinner, his very sneeze has the music of the dinner-bell in it. I am simply bursting with the King's secret. I shall never manage to hold my tongue in that crowd. Solitude's my only safety. So until my friend gets up from the session of affairs, I will wait for him in this precinct of the House of Terraces.

Nipunika enters.

NIPUNIKA

I am bidden by my lady the King's daughter of Kashi, "Nipunika, since my lord came back from doing homage to the Sun, he has had no heart for anything. So just go and learn from his dear friend, the noble Manavaka, what is disturbing his mind." Well and good! but how shall I overreach that rogue—a Brahmin he calls himself, with the murrain to him! But there! thank Heaven, he can't keep a secret long; 'tis like a dewdrop on a rare blade of grass. Well, I must hunt him out. O! there stands the noble Manavaka, silent and sad like a monkey in a picture. I will accost him. (*Approaching*) Salutation to the noble Manavaka!

MANAVAKA

Blessing to your ladyship! (*Aside*) Ugh, the very sight of this little rogue of a tiring-woman makes the secret jump at my

throat. I shall burst! I shall split! Nipunika, why have you left the singing lesson and where are you off to?

NIPUNIKA

To see my lord the King, by my lady's orders.

MANAVAKA

What are her orders!

NIPUNIKA

Noble sir, this is the Queen's message. "My lord has always been kind and indulgent to me, so that I have become a stranger to grief. He never before disregarded my sorrow"—

MANAVAKA

How? how? has my friend offended her in any way?

NIPUNIKA

Offended? Why, he addressed my lady by the name of a girl for whom he is pining.

MANAVAKA

(Aside)

What, he has let out his own secret? Then why am I agonizing here in vain? *(Aloud)* He called her Urvasie?

NIPUNIKA

Yes. Noble Manavaka, who is that Urvasie?

MANAVAKA

Urvasie is the name of a certain Apsara. The sight of her has sent the King mad. He is not only tormenting the life out of my lady, but out of me too with his aversion to everything but moaning.

NIPUNIKA

(Aside)

So! I have stormed the citadel of my master's secret. *(Aloud)* What am I to say to the Queen?

MANAVAKA

Nipunika, tell my lady with my humble regards that I am endeavouring my best to divert my friend from this mirage and

I will not see her ladyship till it is done.

NIPUNIKA

As your honour commands.

She goes.

BARDS

(*Within*)

Victory, victory to the King!
The Sun in Heaven for ever labours; wide
His beams dispel the darkness to the verge
Of all this brilliant world. The King too toils,
Rescuing from night and misery and crime
His people. Equal power to these is given
And labour, the King on earth, the Sun in Heaven.
The brilliant Sun in Heaven rests not from toil;
Only at high noon in the middle cusp
And azure vault the great wheels slacken speed
A moment, then resume their way; thou too
In the mid-moment of daylight lay down
Thy care, put by the burden of a crown.

MANAVAKA

Here's my dear friend risen from the session. I will
join him.

He goes out, then re-enters with Pururavas.

PURURAVAS

(*Sighing*)

No sooner seen than in my heart she leaped.
O easy entrance! since the bannered Love
With his unerring shaft had made the breach
Where she came burning in.

MANAVAKA

(*Aside*)

Alas the poor

King's daughter of Kashi!

PURURAVAS
(Looking steadfastly at him)

Hast thou kept thy trust—

My secret?

MANAVAKA
(Depressed)

Ah! that daughter of a slave
 Has overreached me. Else he would not ask
 In just that manner.

PURURAVAS
(Alarmed)
 What now? Silence?

MANAVAKA

Why, sir,

It's this, I've padlocked so my tongue that even
 To you I could not give a sudden answer.

PURURAVAS
 'Tis well. O how shall I beguile desire?
 MANAVAKA

Let's to the kitchen.

PURURAVAS
 Why, what's there?
 MANAVAKA

What's there?

The question! From all quarters gathered in
 Succulent sweets and five-fold eatableness,
 Music from saucepan and from frying-pan,
 The beauty of dinner getting ready. There's
 A sweet beguiler to your emptiness!

PURURAVAS
(Smiling)

For you whose heart is in your stomach. I
 Am not so readily eased who fixed my soul

Upon what I shall hardly win.

MANAVAKA

Not win?

Why, tell me, came you not within her sight?

PURURAVAS

What comfort is in that?

MANAVAKA

When she has seen you,

How is she hard to win?

PURURAVAS

O your affection

Utters mere partiality.

MANAVAKA

You make me

Desperate to see her. Why, sir, she must be
A nonpareil of grace. Like me perhaps?

PURURAVAS

Who could with words describe each perfect limb
Of that celestial whole? Take her in brief,
O friend, for she is ornament's ornament,
And jewels cannot make her beautiful.
They from her body get their grace. And when
You search the universe for similes,
Her greater beauty drives you to express
Fair things by her, not her by lesser fairness:
So she's perfection's model.

MANAVAKA

No wonder then,

With such a shower of beauty, that you play
The rainbird open-mouthed to let drops glide
Graciously down his own particular gullet.
But whither now?

PURURAVAS

When love grows large with yearning,
He has no sanctuary but solitude.
I pray you, go before me to the park.

MANAVAKA

(*Aside*)

Oh God, my dinner! There's no help. (*Aloud*) This way.
Lo, here the park's green limit. See, my lord,
How this fair garden sends his wooing breeze
To meet his royal guest.

PURURAVAS

O epithet

Most apt. Indeed this zephyr in fond arms
Impregnating with honey spring-creeper
And flattering with his kiss the white May-bloom,
Seems to me like a lover girl-divided
Between affection smooth and eager passion.

MANAVAKA

May like division bless your yearning, sir.
We reach the garden's gate. Enter, my lord.

PURURAVAS

Enter thou first. O! I was blindly sanguine,
By refuge in this flowery solitude
Who thought to heal my pain. As well might swimmer
Hurled onward in a river's violent hands
Oppose that roaring tide, as I make speed
Hither for my relief.

MANAVAKA

And wherefore so?

PURURAVAS

Was passion not enough to torture me,
Still racking the resistless mind with thoughts
Of unattainable delight? But I

Must add the mango-trees' soft opening buds,
And hurt myself with pallid drifting leaves,
And with the busy zephyr wound my soul.

MANAVAKA

Be not so full of grief. For Love himself
Will help you soon to your extreme desire.

PURURAVAS

I seize upon thy word,—the Brahmin's speech
That never can be false!

MANAVAKA

See what a floral

Green loveliness expresses the descent
And rosy incarnation of the spring.
Do you not find it lovely?

PURURAVAS

Friend, I do.

I study it tree by tree and leaf by leaf.
This courbouc's like a woman's rosy nail,
But darkens to the edge; heavy with crimson,
Yon red asoka breaking out of bud
Seems all on fire; and here the carvy mounting
Slight dust of pollen on his stamen-ends
Clusters with young sweet bloom. Methinks I see
The infant honeyed soul of spring, half-woman,
Grow warm with bud of youth.

MANAVAKA

This arbour, green,
With blossoms, loosened by the shock of bees
Upon a slab of costly stone prepares
With its own hands your cushioned honours. Take
The courtesy.

PURURAVAS

As you will.

MANAVAKA

Here sit at ease.

The sensitive beauty of the creepers lax
Shall glide into your soul and gently steal
The thought of Urvasie.

PURURAVAS

O no, mine eyes

Are spoilt by being indulged in her sweet looks,
And petulantly they reject all feebler
Enchantings, even the lovely embowering bloom
Of these grace-haunted creepers bending down
To draw me with their hands. I am sick for her.
Rather invent some way to my desire.

MANAVAKA

Oh rare! when Indra for Ahalya pined
A cheapjack was his counsellor; you as lucky
Have me for your ally. Mad all! mad all!

PURURAVAS

Not so! affection edging native wit
Some help it's sure to find for one it loves.

MANAVAKA

Good, I will cogitate. Disturb me not
With your love-moanings.

PURURAVAS

(His right arm throbbing. Aside)

Her face of perfect moonlight
Is all too heavenly for my lips. How canst thou then
Throb expectation in my arm, O Love?
Yet all my heart is suddenly grown glad
As if it had heard the feet of my desire.

*He waits hopefully. There enter in the sky Urvasie and
Chitralkha.*

CHITRALEKHA

Will you not even tell me where we go?

URVASIE

Sister, when I upon the Peak of Gold
Was stayed from Heaven by the creeper's hands,
You mocked me then. And have you now to ask
Whither it is I go?

CHITRALEKHA

To seek the side
Of King Pururavas you journey then?

URVASIE

Even so shameless is your sister's mind.

CHITRALEKHA

Whom did you send before, what messenger
To him you love?

URVASIE

My heart.

CHITRALEKHA

O yet think well,
Sister; do not be rash.

URVASIE

Love sends me, Love
Compels me. How can I then think?

CHITRALEKHA

To that
I have no answer.

URVASIE

Then take me to him soon.
Only let not our way be such as lies
Within the let of hindrance.

CHITRALEKHA

Fear not that.
Has not the great Preceptor of the Gods
Taught us to wear the crest invincible?
While that is bound, not any he shall dare

Of all the Heaven-opposing faction stretch
An arm of outrage.

URVASIE
(*Abashed*)
Oh true! my heart forgot.

CHITRALEKHA
Look, sister! For in Ganges' gliding waves
Holier by influx of blue Yamuna,
The palace of the great Pururavas,
Crowning the city with its domes, looks down
As in a glass at its own mighty image.

URVASIE
All Eden to an earthly spot is bound.
But where is he who surely will commiserate
A pining heart?

CHITRALEKHA
This park which seems one country
With Heaven, let us question. See, the King
Expects thee, like the pale new-risen moon
Waiting for moonlight.

URVASIE
How beautiful he is—
Fairer than when I saw him first!

CHITRALEKHA
'Tis true.
Come, we will go to him.

URVASIE
I will not yet.
Screened in with close invisibility,
I will stand near him, learn what here he talks
Sole with his friend.

CHITRALEKHA
You'll do your will always.

MANAVAKA

Courage! your difficult mistress may be caught,
Two ways.

URVASIE

(*Jealously*)

O who is she, that happy she
Being wooed by such a lover, preens herself
And is proud?

CHITRALEKHA

Why do you mock the ways of men
And are a Goddess?

URVASIE

I dare not, sweet, I fear
To learn too suddenly my own misfortune,
If I use heavenly eyes.

MANAVAKA

Listen, you dreamer!
Are you deaf? I tell you I have found a way:

PURURAVAS

Speak on.

MANAVAKA

Woo sleep that marries men with dreams,
Or on a canvas paint in Urvsie
And gaze on her for ever.

URVASIE

(*Aside*)

O sinking coward heart, now, now revive.

PURURAVAS

And either is impossible. For look!
How can I, with this rankling wound of love,
Call to me sleep who marries men with dreams?
And if I paint the sweetness of her face,

Will not the tears, before it is half done,
Blurring my gaze with mist, blot the dear vision?

CHITRALEKHA

Heard'st thou?

URVASIE

I have heard all. It was too little
For my vast greed of love.

MANAVAKA

Well, that's my stock
Of counsel.

PURURAVAS

(*Sighing*)

Oh me! she knows not my heart's pain,
Or knowing it, with those her heavenly eyes
Scorns my poor passion. Only the arrowed Love
Is gratified tormenting with her bosom
My sad, unsatisfied and pale desire.

CHITRALEKHA

Heard'st thou, sister?

URVASIE

He must not think so of me!
I would make answer, sister, but to his face
I have not hardihood. Suffer me then,
To trust to faery birch-leaf mind-created
My longing.

CHITRALEKHA

It is well. Create and write.

*Urvasie writes in a passion of timidity and excitement, then
throws the leaf between Pururavas and Manavaka.*

MANAVAKA

Murder! murder! I'm killed! I'm dead! help! help!

(*Looking*)

What's this? a serpent's skin come down to eat me?

PURURAVAS

(Looks closely and laughs)

No serpent's slough, my friend, only a leaf
Of birch-tree with a scroll of writing traced on it.

MANAVAKA

Perhaps the invisible fair Urvasie
Heard you complain and answers.

PURURAVAS

To desire

Nothing can seem impossible.

He takes the leaf and reads it to himself, then with joy.

O friend,

How happy was your guess!

MANAVAKA

I told you so.

The Brahmin's speech! Read, read! aloud, if it please you.

URVASIE

(Aside)

The Brahmin has his own urbanity!

PURURAVAS

Listen.

MANAVAKA

I am all ears.

PURURAVAS

(Reading aloud)

"My master and my King!

Were I what thy heart thinks and knows me not,
Scorning thy love, would then the soft-winged breeze
Of deathless gardens and the unfading flowers
That strew the beds of Paradise, to me
Feel fire!"

URVASIE

What will he say now?

CHITRALEKHA

What each limb,
That is a drooping lotus-stalk with love,
Has said already.

MANAVAKA

You're consoled, I hope?
Don't tell me what you feel. I've felt the same
When I've been hungry and one popped in on me
With sweetmeats in a tray.

PURURAVAS

Consoled! a word
How weak! I con this speaking of my sweet,
This dear small sentence full of beautiful meaning,
This gospel of her answering love, and feel
Her mouth upon my mouth and her soft eyes
Swimming and large gaze down into my own,
And touch my lifted lids with hers.

URVASIE

O even
Such sweetness feels thy lover.

PURURAVAS

Friend, my finger
Moistening might blot the lines. Do thou then hold
This sweet handwriting of my love.

He gives the leaf to Manavaka.

MANAVAKA

But tell me.
Why does your mistress, having brought to bloom
Your young desire, deny its perfect fruit?

URVASIE

O sister, my heart flutters at the thought
Of going to my lord. While I cajole

And strengthen the poor coward, show yourself,
Go to him, tell him all that I may speak.

CHITRALEKHA

I will.

She becomes visible and approaches the King.

Hail, lord our King.

PURURAVAS

(Joyfully)

O welcome, welcome!

He looks around for Urvasie.

Yet, fair one, as the Yamuna not mixed
With Ganges, to the eye that saw their beauty
Of wedded waters, seems not all so fair,
So thou without thy sister givest not
That double delight.

CHITRALEKHA

First is the cloud's dim legion
Seen in the Heavens; afterwards comes the lightning.

MANAVAKA

(Aside)

What! this is not the very Urvasie?
Only the favourite sister of that miracle?

PURURAVAS

Here sit down, fairest.

CHITRALEKHA

Let me first discharge
My duty. Urvasie by me bows down
Her face thus to her monarch's feet, imploring—

PURURAVAS

Rather commanding.

CHITRALEKHA

She whom in Titan hands
Afflicted thou didst pity, thou didst rescue,

Now needs much more thy pity, not by hands
Titan, but crueller violence of love
Oppressed—the sight of thee her sudden cause.

PURURAVAS

O Chitralekha, her thou tell'st me of
Passionate for me. Hast thou not eyes to know
Pururavas in anguish for her sake?
One prayer both pray to Kama, 'Iron with iron
Melts in fierce heat; why not my love with me?'

CHITRALEKHA

(Returning to Urvasie)

Come, sister, to your lord. So much his need
Surpasses yours, I am his ambassador.

URVASIE

(Becoming visible)

How unexpectedly hast thou with ease
Forsook me!

CHITRALEKHA

(With a smile)

In a moment I shall know
Who forsakes whom, sister. But come away
And give due greeting.

*Urvasie approaches the King fearfully and bows down,
then low and bashfully.*

Conquest to the King!

PURURAVAS

I conquer, love, indeed, when thy dear lips
Give greeting to me, vouchsafed to no mortal
But Indra only.

He takes her by both hands and makes her sit down.

MANAVAKA

I am a mighty Brahmin and the friend
Of all earth's lord. O'erlook me not entirely.

Urvasie smiles and bows to him.
Peace follow you and keep you.

MESSENGER OF THE GODS
(*Cries from within*)

Chitralkha, urge haste on Urvasie.
This day the wardens of the ancient worlds
And the great King of Heaven himself will witness
That piece where all the passions live and move,
Quickened to gracious gesture in the action
Deposed in you by Bharat Sage, O sisters.

All listen, Urvasie sorrowfully.

CHITRALEKHA
Thou hear'st the Messenger of Heaven? Take leave,
Sweet, of the King.

URVASIE
I cannot speak!

CHITRALEKHA
My liege,
My sister not being lady of herself
Beseeches your indulgence. She would be
Without a fault before the Gods.

PURURAVAS
(*Articulating with difficulty*)
Alas!

I must not wish to hinder you when Heaven
Expects your service. Only do not forget
Pururavas.

*Urvasie goes with her sister, still looking backwards towards
the King.*

O she is gone! my eyes
Have now no cause for sight: they are worthless balls
Without an object.

MANAVAKA

Why, not utterly.

He is about to give the birch-leaf.

There's—Heavens! 'tis gone; it must have drifted down,
While I, being all amazed with Urvasie,
Noticed nothing.

PURURAVAS

What is it thou wouldst say?

There is—?

MANAVAKA

No need to droop your limbs and pine.
Your Urvasie has to your breast been plucked
With cords of passion, knots that will not slacken
Strive as she may.

PURURAVAS

My soul tells me like comfort.

For as she went, not lady of her limbs
To yield their sweets to me for ever, yet
Her heart, which was her own, in one great sob
From 'twixt two trembling breasts shaken with sighs
Came panting out. I hear it throb within me.

MANAVAKA

(Aside)

Well, my heart's all a-twitter too. Each moment
I think he is going to mention the damned birch-leaf.

PURURAVAS

With what shall I persuade mine eyes to comfort?
The letter!

MANAVAKA

(Searching)

What! Hullo! It's gone! Come now,
It was no earthly leaf; it must have gone
Flying behind the skirts of Urvasie.

PURURAVAS

(Bitterly, in vexation)

Will you then never leave your idiot trick
Of carelessness? Search for it.

MANAVAKA

(Getting up)

Oh, well! well!

It can't be far. Why, here it is—or here—or here.

*While they search, the Queen enters, with her attendants
and Nipunika.*

AUSHINARIE

Now, maiden, is't true thou tell'st me? Saw'st thou really
My lord and Manavaka approach the harbour?

NIPUNIKA

I have not told my lady falsehood ever
That she should doubt me.

AUSHINARIE

Well, I will lurk thick-screened

With hanging creepers and surprise what he
Disburdens from his heart in his security.
So I shall know the truth.

NIPUNIKA

(Sulkily)

Well, as you please.

They advance.

AUSHINARIE

(Looking ahead)

What's yonder like a faded rag that lightly
The southern wind guides towards us?

NIPUNIKA

It is a birch-leaf.

There's writing on it; the letters, as it rolls,
Half show their dinted outlines. Look, it has caught

Just on your anklet's spike. I'll lift and read.

She disengages the leaf.

AUSHINARIE

Silently first peruse it; if 'tis nothing
Unfit for me to know, then I will hear.

NIPUNIKA

It is, oh, it must be that very scandal.
Verses they seem and penned by Urvasie,
And to my master. Manavaka's neglect
Has thrown it in our hands.

Laughs.

AUSHINARIE

Tell me the purport.

NIPUNIKA

I'll read the whole. "My master and my King!
Were I what thy heart thinks and knows me not,
Scorning thy love, would then the soft-winged breeze
Of deathless gardens and unfading flowers
That strew the beds of Paradise, to me
Feel fire!"

AUSHINARIE

So! by this dainty love-letter
He is enamoured then, and of the nymph.

NIPUNIKA

It's plain enough.

They enter the arbour.

MANAVAKA

What's yonder to the wind
Enslaved, that flutters on the parkside rockery?

PURURAVAS

(Rising)

Wind of the south, thou darling of the Spring,
Seize rather on the flowery pollen stored

By months of fragrance, that gold dust of trees.
With this thou mightest perfume all thy wings.
How wilt thou profit, snatching from me, O wind,
My darling's dear handwriting, like a kiss
All love? When thou did'st woo thine Anjana,
Surely thou knewest lovers' dying hearts
Are by a hundred little trifles kept,
All slight as this!

NIPUNIKA

See, mistress, see! A search
In progress for the leaf.

AUSHINARIE

Be still.

MANAVAKA

Alas!

I was misled with but a peacock's feather,
Faded, a saffron splendour of decay.

PURURAVAS

In every way I am undone.

AUSHINARIE

(Approaching suddenly)

My lord,

Be not so passionate; here is your dear letter.

PURURAVAS

(Confused)

The Queen! O welcome!

MANAVAKA

(Aside)

I'll come, if 'twere convenient

To tell the truth.

PURURAVAS

(Aside)

What shall I do now, friend,

Or say?

MANAVAKA

(*Aside*)

Much you will say! A thief red-handed
Caught with his swag!

PURURAVAS

(*Aside*)

Is this a time for jesting?

(*Aloud*)

Madam, it was not this I sought but other,
A record of state, a paper that I dropped.

AUSHINARIE

Oh, you do well to hide your happiness.

MANAVAKA

My lady, hurry on His Majesty's dinner.
When bile accumulates, dinner does the trick.

AUSHINARIE

A noble consolation for his friend
The Brahmin finds! Heard'st thou, Nipunika?

MANAVAKA

Why, madam, even a goblin is appeased
By dinner.

PURURAVAS

Fool! by force you'd prove me guilty.

AUSHINARIE

Not yours the guilt my lord! I am in fault
Who force my hated and unwelcome face
Upon you. But I go. Nipunika,
Attend me.

She is departing in wrath.

PURURAVAS

(*Following her*)

Guilty I am. O pardon, pardon!
O look on me more kindly. How can a slave

Be innocent, when whom he should please is angry?
He falls at her feet.

AUSHINARIE

(Aside)

I am not so weak-minded as to value
Such hollow penitence. And yet the terror
Of that remorse I know that I shall feel
If I spurn his kindness, frightens me—but no!
She goes out with Nipunika and attendants.

MANAVAKA

She has rushed off like a torrent full of wrath.
Rise, rise! she's gone.

PURURAVAS

(Rising)

O she did right to spurn me.
Most dulcet words of lovers, sweetest flatteries,
When passion is not there, can find no entrance
To woman's heart; for she knows well the voice
Of real love, but these are stones false-coloured
Rejected by the jeweller's practised eye.

MANAVAKA

This is what you should wish! The eye affected
Brooks not the flaming of a lamp too near.

PURURAVAS

You much misjudge me. Though my heart's gone out
To Urvasie, affection deep I owe
My Queen. But since she scorned my prostrate wooing,
I will have patience till her heart repent.

MANAVAKA

Oh, hang your patience! keep it for home consumption.
Mine's at an end. Have some faint mercy instead
And save a poor starved Brahmin's life. It's time
For bath and dinner! dinner!!

PURURAVAS
(*Looking upward*)

'Tis noon. The tired

And heated peacock sinks to chill delight
Of water in the tree-encircling channel,
The bee divides a crimson bud and creeps
Into its womb; there merged and safe from fire,
He's lurking. The duck too leaves her blazing pool
And shelters in cold lilies on the bank,
And in yon summer-house weary of heat
The parrot from his cage for water cries.

They go.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Hermitage of the Saint Bharat in Heaven. Galava and Pelava.*

GALAVA

Pelava, thee the Sage admitted, happier
Chosen, to that great audience in the house
Of highest Indra—I meanwhile must watch
The sacred flame; inform my absence. Was
The divine session with the acting pleased?

PELAVA

Of pleased I know not; this I well could see
They sat all lost in that poetic piece
Of Saraswatie, "Luxmie's Choice"—breathlessly
Identified themselves with every mood.
But—

GALAVA

Ah, that but! It opens doors to censure.

PELAVA

Yes, Urvasie was heedless, missed her word.

GALAVA

How? how?

PELAVA

She acted Luxmie; Menaka
Was Varunie; who asking, "Sister, see,
The noble and the beautiful of Heaven,
And Vishnu and the guardians of the worlds.
To whom does thy heart go mid all these glories?"—
Urvasie should have answered 'Purushottam.'
But from her lips 'Pururavas' leaped forth.

GALAVA

Our organs are the slaves of fate and doom!
Was not the great Preceptor angry?

PELAVA

Yes;

He cursed her, but high Indra blessed.

GALAVA

What blessing?

PELAVA

“Since thou hast wronged my teaching and my fame,
For thee no place in Heaven”—so frowned the Sage.
Heaven’s monarch marked her when the piece was ended,
Drooping, her sweet face bowed with shame, and said,
With gracious brows, “Since thou hast fixed thy heart
Upon my friend and strong ally in war,
I will do both a kindness. Go to him
And love and serve him as thy lord until
A child is got in thee and he behold
His offspring’s face.”

GALAVA

O nobly this became

Indra; he knows to value mighty hearts.

PELAVA

(Looking at the Sun)

Look, in our talk if we have not transgressed
Our teacher’s hour for bathing. Galava,
We should be at his side.

GALAVA

Let us make haste.

They go out.

SCENE II.—*Outside the palace of Pururavas, beneath the House of Gems. The terrace of the House of Gems with a great staircase leading up to it.*

The Chamberlain Latavya enters.

LATAVYA

(Sighing)

All other men when life is green and strong
Marry and toil and get them wealth, then, ageing,
Their sons assume the burden, they towards rest
Their laboured faces turn. But us for ever
Service, a keyless dungeon still renewed,
Wears down; and hard that service is which keeps
O'er women ward and on their errands runs.
Now Kashi's daughter, careful of her vow,
Commands me, "I have put from me, Latavya,
The obstinacy of offended love
And wooed my husband through Nipunika.
Thou too entreat him." Therefore I linger here
Waiting till the King's greatness swiftly come,
His vesper worship done. It dims apace.
How beautifully twilight sits and dreams
Upon these palace walls! The peacocks now
Sit on their perches, drowsed with sleep and night,
Like figures hewn in stone. And on the roof
The fluttering pigeons with their pallid wings
Mislead the eye, disguised as rings of smoke
That from the window-ways have floated out
Into the evening. In places flower-bestrewn
The elders of the high seraglio, gentle souls
Of holy manners, set the evening lamps,
Dividing darkness; flames of auspice burn.

The King! I hear the sound of many feet,
 Ringed round with torches he appears, his girls
 Hold up with young fair arms. O form august
 Like Mainak, when as yet the hills had wings,
 Moving, and the slim trees along its ridge
 Flickered with vermeil shaken blooms. Just here
 I'll wait him, in the pathway of his glance.

*Enter Pururavas, surrounded by girl attendants carrying
 torches; with him Manavaka.*

PURURAVAS

(Aside)

Day passes with some pale attempt at calm,
 For then work walls the mind from the fierce siege
 Of ever-present passion. But how shall I
 Add movement to the tardy-footed night,
 The long void hours by no distraction winged?

LATAVYA

(Approaching).

Long live the King! My lady says, "The moon
 Tonight in splendour on the House of Jewels
 Rises like a bright face. On the clear terrace,
 My husband by my side, I would await
 With Rohinie, his heavenly fair delight,
 The God's embracings."

PURURAVAS

What the Queen wills, was ever

My law, Latavya.

LATAVYA

So I'll tell my lady.

He goes.

PURURAVAS

Think you in very truth for her vow's sake
 My lady makes this motion?

MANAVAKA

Rather I deem

'Tis her remorse she cloaks with holy vows,
Atoning thus for a prostration scorned.

PURURAVAS

O true! the proud and loving hearts of women,
Who have their prostrate dear ones spurned, repenting
Are plagued with sweet accusing memories
Of eyes that ask forgiveness, outstretched hands,
Half-spoken words and touches on their feet
That travel to the heart. Precede me then
To the appointed terrace.

MANAVAKA

Look, my lord,

The crystal stairs roll upward like bright waves
On moonlit Ganges; yonder the terrace sleeps
Wide-bosomed to the cold and lovely eve.

PURURAVAS

Precede me; we'll ascend.

They ascend to the terrace.

MANAVAKA

The moon is surely

Upon the verge of rise; swiftly the east
Empties of darkness, and the horizon seems
All beautiful and brightening like a face.

PURURAVAS

O aptly said! Behind the peak of rise
The hidden moon, pushing black night aside,
Precedes himself with herald lustres. See!
The daughter of the imperial East puts back
The blinding tresses from her eyes, and smiles,
And takes with undimmed face my soul.

MANAVAKA

Hurrah!

The king of the twice-born has risen all white
And round and luscious like a ball of sugar.

PURURAVAS

(Smiling)

A glutton's eloquence is ever haunted
With images of the kitchen.

(Bowing with folded hands)

Hail, God that rulest

The inactive night! O settler with the sun
For ritual holy, O giver to the Gods
And blessed fathers dead of nectarous wine,
O slayer of the vasty glooms of night,
Whose soul of brightness crowns the Almighty's head,
O moon, all hail! accept thy offspring's prayer.

MANAVAKA

Well now, your grandpapa has heard your vows;
You'll take it from a Brahmin's mouth, through whom
Even he may telepath his message. So,
That's finished. Now sit down and give me a chance
Of being comfortable.

PURURAVAS

(Sitting down, then looking at his attendants)

The moon is risen;

These torches are a vain reiteration
Of brightness. Ladies, rest.

ALL

Our lord commands us.

They go.

PURURAVAS

It is not long before my lady comes.
So, let me, while we yet are lonely here,
Unburden me of my love-ravaged thoughts.

MANAVAKA

They are visible to the blind. Take hope and courage
By thinking of her equal love.

PURURAVAS

I do;

And yet the pain within my heart is great.
For as a mighty river whose vast speed
Stumbles within a narrow pass of huge
And rugged boulders, chides his uncouth bed,
Increasing at each check, even so does love,
His joy of union stinted or deferred,
Rebel and wax a hundred-fold in fire.

MANAVAKA

So your love-wasted limbs increase their beauty,
They are a sign you soon will clasp your love.

PURURAVAS

O friend, as you my longing heaviness
Comfort with hopeful words, my arm too speaks
In quick auspicious throbs.

He looks with hope up to the sky.

MANAVAKA

A Brahmin's word!

There enters in the air Chitralekha with Urvashie in trysting-dress.

URVASIE

(Looking at herself)

Sister, do you not think my trysting-dress,
The dark-blue silk and the few ornaments,
Becomes me vastly? Do you not approve it?

CHITRALEKHA

O inexpressibly! I have no words
To praise it. This I'll say; it makes me wish
I were Pururavas.

URVASIE

Since Love himself
Inspires you, bring me quickly to the dwelling
Of that high beautiful face.

CHITRALEKHA

Look, we draw near.
Your lover's house lifts in stupendous mass,
As it were mountain Coilas, to the clouds.

URVASIE

Look, sister, with the eye of Gods and know
Where is that robber of my heart and what
His occupation?

CHITRALEKHA

(Aside, with a smile)

I will jest with her.

(Aloud)

I see him. He, in a sweet region made
For love and joy, possesses with desire
The body and the bosom of his love.

URVASIE

(Despairingly)

Happy that woman, whosoe'er she be!

CHITRALEKHA

Why, sweet faint-hearted fool, in whom but thee
Should his thoughts joy?

URVASIE

(With a sigh of relief)

Alas, my heart perverse

Will doubt.

CHITRALEKHA

Here on the terraced House of Gems
The King is with his friend sole-sitting. Then,
We may approach.

They descend.

PURURAVAS

O friend, the widening night
And pangs of love keep pace in their increase.

URVASIE

Sister, my heart is torn with apprehension
Of what his words might mean. Let us, ourselves
Invisible, hear their unfettered converse.
My fears might then have rest.

CHITRALEKHA

Good.

MANAVAKA

Take the moonbeams
Whose pregnant nectar comforts burning limbs.

PURURAVAS

But my affliction's not remediable
With such faint medicines. Neither smoothest flowers,
Moonlight, nor sandal visiting every limb,
Nor necklaces of cool delightful pearl,
Only Heaven's nymph can perfectly expel
With bliss, or else—

URVASIE

(Clutching at her bosom with her hand).
O me! who else? who else?

PURURAVAS

Speech secret full of her unedged my pangs.

URVASIE

Heart that left me to flutter in his hands,
Now art thou for that rashness recompensed!

MANAVAKA

Yes, I too when I cannot get sweet venison
And hunger for it, often beguile my belly
With celebrating all its savoury joys.

PURURAVAS

Your belly-loves, good friend, are always with you
And ready to your gulp.

MANAVAKA

You too shall soon

Possess your love.

PURURAVAS

My friend, I have strange feeling.

CHITRALEKHA

Hearken, insatiable, exacting, hearken,
And be convinced!

MANAVAKA

What feeling?

PURURAVAS

This I feel,

As if this shoulder by her shoulder pressed
In the car's shock bore all my sum of being,
And all this frame besides were only weight
Cumbering the impatient earth.

CHITRALEKHA

Yet you delay!

URVASIE

(Suddenly approaching Pururavas)

O me! sister!

CHITRALEKHA

What is it now?

URVASIE

I am

Before him, and he does not care!

CHITRALEKHA

(Smiling)

O thou,

All passionate unreasoning haste! Thou hast not
Put off as yet invisibility.

VOICE
(*Within*)

This way, my lady.
All listen, Urvasie and Chitralekha are despondent.

MANAVAKA
(*In dismay*)

Hey? The Queen is here?
Keep watch upon your tongue.

PURURAVAS
You first discharge
Your face of conscious guilt.

URVASIE
Sister, what now?

CHITRALEKHA
Be calm. We are unseen. This princess looks
As for a vow arrayed, nor long, if so,
Will tarry.

*As she speaks, the Queen and Nipunika enter with attendants
carrying offerings.*

AUSHINARIE
How does yonder spotted moon
Flush with new beauty, O Nipunika,
At Rohinie's embracings.

NIPUNIKA
So too with you,
Lady, my lord looks fairer than himself.

MANAVAKA
The Queen, my lord, looks very sweet and gracious,
Either because I know she'll give me sweetmeats
Or 'tis a sign of anger quite renounced,
And from your memory to exile her harshness
She makes her vow an instrument.

PURURAVAS

Good reasons both;

(*Smiling*)

Yet to my humble judgment the poor second
Has likelier hue. For she in gracious white
Is clad and sylvanly adorned with flowers,
Her raven tresses spangled with young green
Of sacred grass. All her fair body looks
Gentle and kind, its pomp and pride renounced
For lovely meekness to her lord.

AUSHINARIE

(*Approaching*)

My husband!

ATTENDANT

Hail to our master!

MANAVAKA

Peace attend my lady.

PURURAVAS

Welcome.

He takes her hand and draws her down on a seat.

URVASIE

By right this lady bears the style
Of Goddess and of Empress, since no whit
Her noble majesty of fairness yields
To Heaven's Queen.

CHITRALEKHA

O bravely said, my sister!

'Twas worthy of a soul where jealous baseness
Ought never harbour.

AUSHINARIE

I have a vow, my lord,

Which at my husband's feet must be absolved.
Bear with me that I trouble you one moment.

PURURAVAS

No, no, it is not trouble, but a kindness.

MANAVAKA

The good trouble that brings me sweetmeats! often,
O often may such trouble vex my belly.

PURURAVAS

What vow is this you would absolve, my own?

Aushinarie looks at Nipunika.

NIPUNIKA

'Tis that women perform to win back kindness
In eyes of one held dear.

PURURAVAS

If this be so,

Vainly hast thou these tender flower-soft limbs
Afflicted with a vow's austerities,
Beloved. Thou suest for favour to thy servant,
Propitiatest who for thy propitiated
All-loving glance is hungry.

URVASIE

Greatly he loves her!

CHITRALEKHA

Why, silly one, whose heart is gone astraying,
Redoubles words of kindness to his wife.
Do you not know so much?

AUSHINARIE

(Smiling)

Not vain my vow,
That to such words of love has moved already
My husband.

MANAVAKA

Stop, my lord, a word well spoken
Is spoilt by any answer.

AUSHINARIE

Girls, the offering
With which I must adore this gentle moonlight
That dreams upon our terrace!

NIPUNIKA

Here, my lady,
Are flowers, here costly scents, all needed things.

AUSHINARIE

Give them to me.

She worships the moonbeams with flowers and perfumes.

Nipunika, present

The sweetmeats of the offering to the Brahmin.

NIPUNIKA

I will, my lady. Noble Manavaka,
Here is for you.

MANAVAKA

Blessings attend thee. May
Thy vow bear fruit nor end.

AUSHINARIE

Now, dear my lord,
Pray you, draw nearer to me.

PURURAVAS

Behold me, love!

What must I do?

*Aushinarie worships the King, then bowing down
with folded hands*

AUSHINARIE

I, Aushinarie, call
The divine wife and husband, Rohinie
And Mrigalanchhan named the spotted moon,
To witness here my vowed obedient love
To my dear lord. Henceforth whatever woman
My lord shall love and she desire him too,

I will embrace her and as a sister love,
Nor think of jealousy.

URVASIE

I know not wholly
Her drift, and yet her words have made me feel
All pure and full of noble trust.

CHITRALEKHA

Be confident,
Your love will prove all bliss; surely it must
When blessed and sanctioned by this pure, devoted
And noble nature.

MANAVAKA

(Aside)

When from 'twixt his hands
Fish leaps, cries me the disappointed fisher,
"Go, trout, I spare you. This will be put down
To my account in Heaven."

(Aloud)

No more but this
You love my friend, your husband, lady?

AUSHINARIE

Dull fool!

I with the death of my own happiness
Would give my husband ease. From this consider
How dearly I love him.

PURURAVAS

Since thou hast power on me
To give me to another or to keep
Thy slave, I have no right to plead. And yet
I am not as thou thinkest me, all lost,
O thou too jealous, to thy love.

AUSHINARIE

My lord,

We will not talk of that. I have fulfilled
My rite, and with observance earned your kindness.
Girls, let us go.

PURURAVAS

Is thus my kindness earned?

I am not kind, not pleased, if now, beloved,
Thou shun and leave me.

AUSHINARIE

Pardon, my lord. I never

Have yet transgressed the rigour of a vow.

Exeunt Queen, Nipunika and attendants.

URVASIE

Wife-lover, uxorious is this King, and yet
I cannot lure my heart away from him.

CHITRALEKHA

Why, what new trick of wilful passion's this?

PURURAVAS

(Sitting down)

The Queen is not far off.

MANAVAKA

Never heed that,

Speak boldly. She has given you up as hopeless.
So doctors leave a patient, when disease
Defies all remedy, to his own sweet guidance.

PURURAVAS

O that my Urvasie—

URVASIE

Today might win

Her one dear wish.

PURURAVAS

From her invisible feet

The lovely sound of anklets on my ear

Would tinkle, or coming stealing from behind
Blind both my eyes with her soft little hands
Like two cool lotuses upon them fallen:
Or, oh, most sweet! descending on this roof
Shaken with dear delicious terrors, lingering
And hanging back, be by her sister drawn
With tender violence, faltering step by step,
Till she lay panting on my knees.

CHITRALEKHA

Go, sister,

And satisfy his wish.

URVASIE

Must I? well then,

I'll pluck up heart and play with him a little.

*She becomes visible, steals behind the King and covers his eyes
with her hands. Chitrlekha puts off her veil of
invisibility and makes a sign to Manavaka.*

MANAVAKA

Now say, friend, who is this?

PURURAVAS

The hands of beauty.

'Tis that Narayan-born whose limbs are sweetness.

MANAVAKA

How can you guess?

PURURAVAS

What is there here to guess?

My heart tells me. The lily of the night

Needs not to guess it is the moon's cool touch.

She starts not to the sunbeam. 'Tis so with me.

No other woman could but she alone

Heal with her little hands all my sick pining.

*Urvsie removes her hands and rises to her feet; then moves
a step or two away.*

URVASIE

Conquest attend my lord!

PURURAVAS

Welcome, O beauty.

He draws her down beside him.

CHITRALEKHA

Happiness to my brother!

PURURAVAS

Here it sits

Beside me.

URVASIE

Because the Queen has given you to me,
Therefore I dare to take into my arms
Your body like a lover. You shall not think me
Forward.

MANAVAKA

What, set the sun to you on this terrace?

PURURAVAS

O love, if thou my body dost embrace
As seizable, a largess from my Queen,
But whose permission didst thou ask, when thou
Stolest my heart away?

CHITRALEKHA

Brother, she is

Abashed and has no answer. Therefore a moment
Turn to me, grant me one entreaty.

PURURAVAS

Speak.

CHITRALEKHA

When spring is vanished and the torrid heat
Thickens, I must attend the glorious Sun.
Do thou so act that this my Urvsie
Left lonely with thee, shall not miss her Heaven.

MANAVAKA

Why, what is there in Heaven to pine for? There
You do not eat, you do not drink, only
Stare like so many fishes in a row
With wide unblinking eyes.

PURURAVAS

The joys of Heaven
No thought can even outline. Who then shall make
The soul forget which thence has fallen? Of this
Be sure, fair girl, Pururavas is only
Thy sister's slave: no other woman shares
That rule nor can share.

CHITRALEKHA

Brother, this is kind.
Be brave, my Urvasie, and let me go.

URVASIE

(Embracing Chित्रलेखा, pathetically)
Chित्रलेखा, my sister, do not forget me!

CHITRALEKHA

(With a smile)
Of thee I should entreat that mercy, who
Hast got thy love's embrace.

She bows down to the King and goes.

MANAVAKA

Now nobly, sir,
Are you increased with bliss and your desire's
Accrual.

PURURAVAS

You say well. This is my increase;
Who felt not half so blest when I acquired
The universal sceptre of the world
And sovran footstool touched by jewelled heads
Of tributary monarchs, as today

I feel most happy who have won the right
To touch two little feet and am allowed
To be thy slave and do thy lovely bidding.

URVASIE

I have not words to make a sweeter answer.

PURURAVAS

How does the winning of one loved augment
Sweet contradictions! These are the very rays
Of moonlight burned me late, and now they soothe;
Love's wounding shafts caress the heart like flowers,
Thou being with me; all natural sights and sounds,
Once rude and hurtful, now caressing come
Softly, because of thee in my embrace.

URVASIE

I am to blame that I deprived my lord
So long.

PURURAVAS

Beloved and beautiful, not so!
For happiness arising after pain
Tastes therefore sweeter, as the shady tree
To one perplexed with heat and dust affords
A keener taste of Paradise.

MANAVAKA

We have courted

For a long hour the whole delightfulness
Of moonlight in the evening. It is time
To seek repose.

PURURAVAS

Guide therefore this fair friend
The way her feet must henceforth tread.

MANAVAKA

This way.

PURURAVAS

O love, I have but one wish left.

URVASIE

What wish, my lord?

PURURAVAS

When I had not embraced thee, my desire,
One night in passing seemed a hundred nights;
O now if darkness would extend my joys
To equal length of real hours with this
Sweet face upon my bosom, I were blest.

They go.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*The sky near the doors of the sunrise; clouds everywhere. Chitralekha and Sahajanya.*

SAHAJANYA

Dear Chitralekha, like a fading flower
The beauty of thy face all marred reveals
Sorrow of heart. Tell me thy melancholy;
I would be sad with thee.

CHITRALEKHA

(Sorrowfully)

O Sahajanya!

Sister, by rule of our vicissitude,
I serving at the feet of the great Sun
Was troubled at heart for want of Urvasie.

SAHAJANYA

I know your mutual passion of sisterliness.
What after?

CHITRALEKHA

I had heard no news of her
So many days. Then I collected vision
Divine into myself to know of her.
O miserable knowledge! .

SAHAJANYA

Sister, sister!

What knowledge of sorrow?

CHITRALEKHA

(Still sorrowfully)

I saw that Urvasie

Taking with her Pururavas and love—
For he had on his ministers imposed

His heavy yoke of kingship—went to sport
Amorously in Gandhamadan green.

SAHAJANYA

(Proudly)

O love is joy indeed, when in such spots
Tasted. And there?

CHITRALEKHA

And there upon the strands
Of heavenly Ganges, one, a lovely child
Of spirits musical, Udayavatie,
Was playing, making little forts of sand;
On her with all his soul the monarch gazed.
This angered Urvasie.

SAHAJANYA

O natural!

Deep passion always is intolerant.
Afterwards?

CHITRALEKHA

She pushed aside her pleading husband,
Perplexed by the Preceptor's curse forgot
The War-God's vow and entered in that grove
Avoidable of women; but no sooner
Had trod its green, most suddenly she was
A creeper rooted to that fatal verge.

SAHAJANYA

(In a voice of grief)

Now do I know that Fate's indeed a thing
Inexorable, spares no one, when such love
Has such an ending; O all too suddenly!
How must it be then with Pururavas?

CHITRALEKHA

All day and night he passions in that grove
Seeking her. And this cool advent of cloud

That turns even happy hearts to yearning pain,
Will surely kill him.

SAHAJANYA

Sister, not long can grief
Have privilege over such beautiful beings.
Some God will surely pity them, some cause
Unite once more.

(Looking towards the east)

Come, sister. Our lord the Sun
Is rising in the east. Quick, to our service.

They go.

SCENE II.—*Pururavas enters disordered, his eyes fixed on the sky.*

PURURAVAS

(Angrily)

Halt, ruffian, halt! Thou in thy giant arms
Bearest away my Urvasie! He has
Soared up from a great crag into the sky
And wars me, hurling downward bitter rain
Of arrows. With this thunderbolt I smite thee.

*He lifts up a clod and runs as to hurl it; then pauses and
looks upwards.*

(Pathetically)

Oh me, I am deceived! This was a cloud
Equipped for rain, no proud and lustful fiend,
The rainbow, not a weapon drawn to kill,
Quick-driving showers are these, not sleety rain
Of arrows; and that brilliant line like streak
Of gold upon a touchstone, cloud-inarmed,
I saw, was lightning, not my Urvasie.

(Sorrowfully)

Where shall I find her now? Where clasp those thighs
Swelling and smooth and white? Perhaps she stands
Invisible to me by heavenly power,
All sullen? But her anger was ever swift
And ended soon. Perhaps into her Heavens
She has soared? O no! her heart was soft with love,
And love of me. Nor any fiend adverse
To Heaven had so much strength as to hale her hence
While I looked on. Yet is she gone from me
Invisible, swiftly invisible—

Whither? O bitter miracle! and yet—

He scans each horizon, then pauses and sighs.

Alas! when fortune turns against a man,
Then sorrow treads on sorrow. There was already
This separation from my love, and hard
Enough to bear; and now the pleasant days,
Guiltless of heat, with advent cool of rain
Must help to slay me.

(Laughing)

Why do I so tamely
Accept addition to my pangs? For even
The saints confess, "The king controls the seasons;"
If it be so, I will command the thunder
Back to his stable.

(Pausing to think)

No, I must permit
The season unabridged of pomp; the signs
Of storm are now my only majesty;
This sky with lightning gilt and laced becomes
My canopy of splendour, and the trees
Of rain-time waving wide their lavish bloom
Fan me; the sapphire-throated peacocks, voiced
Sweeter for that divorce from heat, are grown
My poets; the mountains are my citizens,
They pour out all their streams to swell my greatness.
But I waste time in idly boasting vain
Glories and lose my love. To my task, to my task!
This grove, this grove should find her.

He moves onward.

And here, O here
Is something to enrage my resolution.
Red-tinged, expanding wet and full of rain,
These blossom-cups recall to me her eyes
Brimming with angry tears. How shall I trace her,
Or what thing tell me "Here and here she wandered?"
If she had touched with her beloved feet

The rain-drenched forest-sands, there were a line
Of little gracious footprints seen, with lac
Envermeilled, sinking deeper towards the heel
Because o'erburdened by her hips' large glories.

He moves onward.

(Exultantly)

Oh joy! I see a hint of her. This way
Then went her angry beauty! Lo, her bodice
Bright green as is a parrot's belly, smitten
With crimson drops. It once veiled in her bosom
And paused to show her navel deep as love.
These are her tears that from those angry eyes
Went trickling, stealing scarlet from her lips
To spangle all this green. Doubtless her heaving
Tumult of breasts broke its dear hold and, she
Stumbling in anger, from my heaven it drifted.
I'll gather it to my kisses.

He stoops to it, then sorrowfully,

O my heart!

Only green grass with dragon-wings enamelled!
From whom shall I in all the desolate forest
Have tidings of her, or what creature help me?
Lo, in yon waste of crags the peacock! he
Upon a cool moist rock that breathes of rain
Exults, aspires, his gorgeous mass of plumes
Seized, blown and scattered by the roaring gusts.
Pregnant of shrillness is his outstretched throat,
His look is with the clouds. Him I will question:
Have the bright corners of thine eyes beheld,
O sapphire-throated bird, her, my delight,
My wife, my passion, my sweet grief? Yielding
No answer, he begins his gorgeous dance.
Why should he be so glad of my heart's woe?
I know thee, peacock. Since my cruel loss

Thy plumes that stream in splendour on the wind,
Have not one rival left. For when her heavy
Dark wave of tresses over all the bed
In softness wide magnificently collapsed
On her smooth shoulders massing purple glory
And bright with flowers, she passioning in my arms,
Who then was ravished with thy brilliant plumes,
Vain bird? I question thee not, heartless thing,
That joyest in others' pain.

(Turning away)

Lo, where, new-fired

With sweet bird-passion by the season cool,
A cuckoo on the plum-tree sits. This race
Is wisest of the families of birds
And learned in love. I'll greet him like himself.
O cuckoo, thou art called the bird of love,
His sweet ambassador, O cuckoo. Thou
Criest and thy delightful voice within
The hearts of lovers like an arrow comes,
Seeks out the anger there and softly kills.
Me also, cuckoo, to my darling bring
Or her to me. What saidst thou? "How could she
Desert thee loving?" Cuckoo, I will tell thee.
Yes, she was angry. Yet I know I never
Gave her least cause. But, cuckoo, dost thou know not
That women love to feel their sovereignty
Over their lovers, nor transgression need
To be angry? How! Dost thou break off, O bird,
Our converse thus abruptly and turn away
To thine own tasks? Alas, 'twas wisely said
That men bear easily the bitter griefs
Which others feel. For all my misery
This bird, my orison disregarding, turns
To attack the plum-tree's ripening fruit as one

Drunken with love his darling's mouth. And yet
I cannot be angry with him. Has he not
The voice of Urvasie? Abide, O bird,
In bliss, though I unhappy hence depart.

He walks on, then stops short and listens.

O Heaven? what do I hear? the anklets' cry
That tell the musical footing of my love?
To right of this long grove 'twas heard. Oh, I
Will run to her.

(Hurrying forward)

Me miserable! This was
No anklets' cry embraceable with hands,
But moan of swans who seeing the grey wet sky
Grow passionate for Himaloy's distant tarns.
Well, be it so. But ere in far desire
They leap up from this pool, I well might learn
Tidings from them of Urvasie.

(Approaching)

Listen,

O king of all white fowl that waters breed.
Afterwards to Himaloy wing thy way,
But now the lotus fibres in thy beak
Gathered by thee for provender resign;
Ere long thou shalt resume them. Me, ah, first
From anguish rescue, O majestic swan,
With tidings of my sweet; always high souls
Prefer another's good to selfish aims.
Thou lookest upward to the Heavens and sayest,
"I was absorbed with thoughts of Himaloy;
Her have I not observed." O swan, thou liest,
For if she never trod upon thy lake's
Embankment, nor thou sawest her archèd brows,
How couldst thou copy then so perfectly
Her footing full of amorous delight,

Or whence didst steal it? Give me back my love,
Thou robber! Thou hast got her gait and this
Is law that he with whom a part is found
Must to the claimant realise the whole.

(Laughing)

O yes, thou flyest up, clanging alarm,
“This is the king whose duty is to punish
All thieves like me!” Go then, but I will plunge
Into new hopeful places, seeking love.
Lo, wild-drake with his mate, famed chocrobacque,
Him let me question. O thou wondrous creature,
All saffron and vermilion! Wilt thou then
Not tell me of my love? Oh, sawest thou not
My Goddess laughing like a lovely child
In the bright house of spring? For, wild-drake, thou
Who gettest from the chariot’s orb thy name,
I who deprived am of her orbèd hips,
The chariot-warrior great Pururavas,
Encompassed with a thousand armed desires,
Question thee. How! “Who? Who?” thou sayest to me!
This is too much. It is not possible
He should not know me! Bird, I am a king
Of kings, and grandson to the Sun and Moon,
And earth has chosen me for her master. This
Were little. I am the loved of Urvashie!
Still art thou silent? I will taunt him, then
Perhaps he’ll speak. Thou, wild-drake, when thy love,
Her body hidden by a lotus-leaf,
Lurks near thee in the pool, deemest her far
And wallest musically to the flowers
A wild deep dirge. Such is thy conjugal
Yearning, thy terror such of even a little
Division from her nearness. Me afflicted,
Me so forlorn thou art averse to bless

With just a little tidings of my love!
 Alas, my miserable lot has made
 All creatures adverse to me. Let me plunge
 Into the deeper wood. Oh no, not yet!
 This lotus with the honey-bees inside
 Making melodious murmur, keeps me. I
 Remember her soft mouth when I have kissed it
 Too cruelly, sobbing exquisite complaint.
 These too I will implore. Alas, what use?
 They will despise me like the others. Yet,
 Lest I repent hereafter of my silence,
 I'll speak to him. O lotus-wooing bee,
 Tell me some rumour of those eyes like wine.
 But no, thou hast not seen that wonder. Else
 Wouldst thou, O bee, affect the lotus' bloom,
 If thou hadst caught the sweetness from her lips
 Breathing, whose scent intoxicates the breeze?
 I'll leave him. Lo! with his mate an elephant.
 His trunk surrounds a nym-tree to uproot.
 To him will I, he may some rumour have
 Or whisper of my love. But softly! Haste
 Will ruin me. Oh, this is not the time!
 Now his beloved mate has in her trunk
 Just found him broken branches odorous
 And sweet as wine with the fresh leaves not long
 In bud, new-honied. These let him enjoy.
 His meal is over now. I may approach
 And ask him. O rut-dripping elephant,
 Sole monarch of the herd, has not that moon
 With jasmines all a glory in her hair
 And limbs of fadeless beauty, carrying
 Youth like a banner, whom to see is bliss,
 Is madness, fallen in thy far ken, O king?
 O joy! he trumpets loud and soft as who
 Would tell me he has seen indeed my love.

Oh, I am gladdened! More to thee I stand
Attracted, elephant, as like with like.
Sovereign of sovereigns is my title, thou
Art monarch of the kingly elephants,
And this wide freedom of thy fragrant rut
Interminable imitates my own
Vast liberality to suppliant men,
Regally; thou hast in all the herd this mate,
I among loveliest women Urvasie.
In all things art thou like me; only I pray,
O friend, that thou mayst never know the pang,
The loss. Be fortunate, king, farewell! Oh, see,
The mountain of the Fragrant Glens appears,
Fair as a dream, with his great plateaus trod
By heavenly feet of women. May it not be,
To this wide vale she too has with her sisters
Brought here her beautiful body full of spring?
Darkness! I cannot see her. Yet by these gleams
Of lightning I may study, I may find.
Ah God! the fruit of guilt is bounded not
With the doer's anguish; this stupendous cloud
Is widowed of the lightning through my sin.
Yet I will leave thee not, O thou huge pile
Of scaling crags, unquestioned. Hear me, answer me!
O mountain, has she entered then the woods,
Love's green estate—ah, she too utter love!
Her breasts were large like thine, with small sweet space
Between them, and like thine her glorious hips
And smooth fair joints a rapture.

Dumb? No answer?

I am too far away, he has not heard me.
Let me draw nearer. Mountain, seen was she,
A woman all bereaved, her every limb
A loveliness, in these delightful woods?

ECHO

Nearer, O nearer! Mountain-seen was she,
A woman all bereaved, her every limb
A loveliness, in these delightful woods.

PURURAVAS

He has answered, answered! O my heart, I draw
Nearer to her! In my own words the hill
Answers thee, O my heart. As joyous tidings
Mayst thou too hear, mountain. She then was seen,
My Urvasie in thy delightful woods?

ECHO

Mountain! mountain! mountain! She then was seen,
My Urvasie in thy delightful woods,
In thy delightful woods, delightful woods.

PURURAVAS

Alas! 'tis Echo mocks me with my voice
Rolling amid the crags and mountain glens.
Out on thee, Echo! Thou hast killed my heart.
O Urvasie! Urvasie! Urvasie!

He falls down and swoons.

(Recovering)

I am all weary and sad. Oh, let me rest
Beside this mountain river for a moment
And woo the breeze that dances on the waves.
All turbid is this stream with violent rain,
And yet I thrill to see it. For, O, it seems
Just like my angry darling when she went
Frowning—as this does with its little waves,—
A wrathful music in her girdle—and see!
This string of birds with frightened clangour rise;
She trailed her raiment as the river its foam,
For it loosened with her passion as she moved
With devious feet, all angry, blind with tears,
And often stopped to brood upon her wrongs:

But soon indignantly her stormy speed
Resumed, so tripping, winding goes the stream,
As she did. O most certainly 'tis she,
My sweet quick-tempered darling, suddenly changed
Into a river's form. I will beseech her
And soothe her wounded spirit. Urvasie?
Did I not love thee perfectly? Did not
My speech grow sweetness when I spoke to thee?
And when did my heart anything but hate
To false our love? O what was the slight fault
Thou foundest in thy servant that thou couldst
Desert him, Urvasie, O Urvasie!
She answers not! It is not she, merely
A river. Urvasie would not have left
Pururavas to tryst with Ocean. And now
Since only by refusal to despair
Can bliss at last be won, I will return
Where first she fled from my pursuing eyes.
This couching stag shall give me tidings of her,
Who looks as if he were a splendid glance
Some dark-eyed Dryad had let fall to admire
This budding foliage and this young green beauty
Of grass. But why averts he then his head
As though in loathing? I perceive his reason.
Lo, his fair hind is hasting towards him, stayed
By their young deerling plucking at her teats.
With her his eyes are solely, her with bent
Lithe neck he watches. Ho, thou lord of hind!
Sawst thou not her I love? O stag, I'll tell thee
How thou shouldst know her. Like thine own dear hind
She had large eyes and loving, and like hers
That gaze was beauty. Why does he neglect
My words and only gaze towards his love?
All prosperous creatures slight the unfortunate!
'Tis natural. Then elsewhere let me seek.

I have found her, I have found her! O a hint
 And token of her way! This one red drop
 Of summer's blood the very codome was,
 Though rough with faulty stamens, yet thought worthy
 To crown her hair. And thou, asoka red,
 Didst watch my slender-waisted when she gave
 So cruelly a loving heart to pain.
 Why dost thou lie and shake thy windy head?
 How couldst thou by her soft foot being untouched
 Break out into such bloom of petals stung
 And torn by jostling crowds of bees, who swarm
 All wild to have thy honey? Ever be blest,
 Thou noble trunk. What should this be, bright red,
 That blazes in a crevice of the rocks?
 For if it were a piece of antelope's flesh
 Torn by a lion, 'twould not have this blaze,
 This lustre haloing it; nor can it be
 A spark pregnant of fire; for all the wood
 Is drowned in rain. No, 'tis a gem, a miracle
 Of crimson, like the red felicitous flower,
 And with one radiant finger of the sun
 Laid on it like a claim. Yet I will take it,
 For it compels my soul with scarlet longing.
 Wherefore? She on whose head it should have burned,
 Whose hair all fragrant with the coral-bloom
 I loved like Heaven, is lost to me, beyond
 Recovery lost to me. Why should I take it
 To mar it with my tears?

A VOICE

Reject it not,
 My son; this is the jewel Union born
 From the red lac that on the marvellous feet
 Was brilliant of Himaloy's child, and, soon,
 Who bears it is united with his love.

PURURAVAS

Who speaks to me? It is a saint who dwells
In forest like the deer. He first of creatures
Has pitied me. O my lord anchoret,
I thank thee. Thou, O Union, if thou end
My separation, if with that small-waisted
Thou shouldst indeed be proved my Union,
Jewel, I'll use thee for my crown, as Shiva
Upon his forehead wears the crescent moon.
This flowerless creeper! Wherefore do mine eyes
Dwell with its barren grace and my heart yearn
Towards it? And yet, O, not without a cause
Has she enchanted me. There standst thou, creeper,
All slender, thy poor sad leaves are moist with rain,
Thou silent, with no voice of honey-bees
Upon thy drooping boughs; as from thy lord
The season separated, leaving off
Thy habit of bloom. Why, I might think I saw
My passionate darling sitting penitent
With tear-stained face and body unadorned,
Thinking in silence how she spurned my love.
I will embrace thee, creeper, for thou art
Too like my love. Urvasie! all my body
Is thrilled and satisfied of Urvasie!
I feel, I feel her living limbs.

(Despairingly)

But how

Should I believe it? Everything I deem
A somewhat of my love, next moment turns
To other. Therefore since by touch at least
I find my dear one, I will not separate
Too suddenly mine eyes from sleep.

(Opening his eyes slowly)

O love,
'Tis thou!
He swoons,

URVASIE
Upraise thy heart, my King, my liege!

PURURAVAS
Dearest, at last I live! O thou hadst plunged me
Into a dark abyss of separation,
And fortunately art thou returned to me,
Like consciousness given back to one long dead.

URVASIE
With inward senses I have watched and felt
Thy whole long agony.

PURURAVAS
With inward senses?
I understand thee not.

URVASIE
I will tell all.
But let my lord excuse my grievous fault,
Who, wretch enslaved by anger, brought to this
My sovereign! Smile on me and pardon me!

PURURAVAS
Never speak of it. Thy clasp is thy forgiveness.
For all my outward senses and my soul
Leap laughing towards thy bosom. Only convince me
How thou couldst live without me such an age.

URVASIE
Hearken. The War-God Skanda, from of old
Virginity eternal vowing, came
To Gandhamadan's bank men call the pure,
And made a law.

PURURAVAS
What law, beloved,

URVASIE

This

That any woman entering these precincts
 Becomes at once a creeper. And for limit
 Of the great curse, "Without the jewel born
 From crimson of my mother's feet can she
 Never be woman more." Now I, my lord,
 My heart perplexed by the Preceptor's curse,
 Forgot the War-God's oath and entered here,
 Rejecting thy entreaties, to the wood
 Avoidable of women: at the first step,
 All suddenly my form was changed. I was
 A creeper growing at the wood's wild end.

PURURAVAS

Oh, now intelligible! When from thy breasts
 Loosening the whole embrace, the long delight,
 I sank back languid, thou wouldst moan for me
 Like one divided far. How is it then
 Possible that thou shouldst bear patiently
 Real distance between us? Lo, this jewel,
 As in thy story, gave thee to my arms.
 Admonished by a hermit sage I kept it.

URVASIE

The jewel Union! Therefore at thy embrace
 I was restored.

She places the jewel gratefully upon her head.

PURURAVAS

Thus stand a while. O fairest,
 Thy face, suffused with crimson from this gem
 Above thee pouring wide its fire and splendour,
 Has all the beauty of a lotus reddening
 In early sunlight.

URVASIE

O sweet of speech! remember
 That thy high capital awaits thee long.

It may be that the people blame me. Let us,
My own dear lord, return.

PURURAVAS

Let us return.

URVASIE

What wafture will my sovereign choose?

PURURAVAS

O waft me

Nearer the sun and make a cloud our chariot,
While lightning like a streaming banner floats
Now seen, now lost to vision, and the rainbow
With freshness of its glory iridescent
Edges us. In thine arms uplift and waft me,
Beloved, through the wide and liquid air.

They go.

ACT V.

SCENE.—*Outside the King's tents near Pratisthana. In the background the confluence of the river Ganges and Yamuna.*

Manavaka alone.

MANAVAKA

After long pleasuring with Urvasie
In Nandan and all woodlands of the Gods,
Our King's at last returned, and he has entered
His city, by the jubilant people met
With splendid greetings, and resumed his toils.
Ah, were he but a father, nothing now
Were wanting to his fullness. This high day
At confluence of great Ganges with the stream
Dark Yamuna, he and his Queen have bathed.
Just now he passed into his tent, and surely
His girls adorn him. I will go exact
My first share of the ointments and the flowers.

MAID

(Within lamenting)

O me unfortunate! the jewel is lost
Accustomed to the noble head of her
Most intimate with the bosom of the King,
His loveliest playmate. I was carrying it
In palm-leaf basket on white cloth of silk;
A vulture doubting this some piece of flesh
Swoops down and soars away with it.

MANAVAKA

Unfortunate!

This was the Union, the crest-jewel, dear
O'er all things to the King. Look where he comes,

His dress half-worn just as he started up
On hearing of his loss. I'll go to him.

He goes.

*Then Pururavas enters with his Amazons of the Bactrian Guard
and other attendants in great excitement.*

PURURAVAS

Huntress! huntress! Where is that robber bird
That snatches his own death? He practises
His first bold pillage in the watchman's house.

HUNTRESS

Yonder, the golden thread within his beak!
Trailing the jewel how he wheels in air
Describing scarlet lines upon the sky!

PURURAVAS

I see him, dangling down the thread of gold
He wheels and dips in rapid circles vast.
The jewel like a whirling firebrand red
Goes round and round and with vermilion rings
Incarnadines the air. What shall we do
To rescue it?

MANAVAKA

(Coming up)

Why do you hesitate to slay him?
He is marked out for death, a criminal.

PURURAVAS

My bow! my bow!

AN AMAZON

I run to bring it!

She goes out.

PURURAVAS

Friend,
I cannot see the bird. Where has it fled?

MANAVAKA

Look! to the southern far horizon wings
The carrion-eating robber.

PURURAVAS

(Turns and looks)

Yes, I see him.

He speeds with the red jewel every way
Branching and shooting light, as 'twere a cluster
Of crimson roses in the southern sky
Or ruby pendant from the lobe of Heaven.

Enter Amazon with the bow.

AMAZON

Sire, I have brought the bow and leathern guard.

PURURAVAS

Too late you bring it. Yon eater of raw flesh
Goes winging far beyond an arrow's range,
And the bright jewel with the distant bird
Blazes like Mars the planet glaring red
Against a wild torn piece of cloud. Who's there?
Noble Latavya!

LATAVYA.

Highness?

PURURAVAS

From me command

The chief of the police, at evening, when
Yon winged outlaw seeks his homing tree,
That he be hunted out.

LATAVYA

It shall be done.

He goes out.

MANAVAKA

Sit down and rest. What place in all broad earth

This jewel-thief can hide in, shall elude
Your world-wide jurisdiction?

PURURAVAS

(Sitting down with Manavaka)

It was not as a gem

Of lustre that I treasured yonder stone,
Now lost in the bird's beak, but 'twas my Union
And it united me with my dear love.

MANAVAKA

I know it, from your own lips heard the tale.

Chamberlain enters with the jewel and an arrow.

LATAVYA

Behold shot through that robber! Though he fled,
Thy anger darting in pursuit has slain him.
Plumb down he fell with fluttering wings from Heaven
And dropped the jewel bright.

All look at it in surprise.

Ill fate o'ertaking

Much worse offence! My lord, shall not this gem
Be washed in water pure and given—to whom?

PURURAVAS

Huntress, go, see it purified in fire,
Then to its case restore it.

HUNTRESS

As the King wills.

She goes out with the jewel.

PURURAVAS

Noble Latavya, came you not to know
The owner of this arrow?

LATAVYA

Letters there are
Carved on the steel; my eyes grow old and feeble,
I could not read them.

PURURAVAS

Therefore give me the arrow.

I will spell out the writing.

The Chamberlain gives him the arrow and he reads.

LATAVYA

And I will fill my office.

He goes out.

MANAVAKA

(Seeing the King lost in thought)

What do you read there?

PURURAVAS

Hear, Manavaka, hear

The letters of this bowman's name.

MANAVAKA

I'm all

Attention; read.

PURURAVAS

O hearken then and wonder.

(Reading)

"Ayus, the smiter of his foemen's lives,
The warrior Ilian's son by Urvasie,
This arrow loosed."

MANAVAKA

(With satisfaction)

Hail, King! now dost thou prosper,
Who hast a son.

PURURAVAS

How should this be? Except

By the great ritual once, never was I
Parted from that beloved; nor have I witnessed
One sign of pregnancy. How could my Goddess
Have borne a son? True, I remember once
For certain days her paps were dark and stained,

And all her fair complexion to the hue
Of that wan creeper paled, and languid-large
Her eyes were. Nothing more.

MANAVAKA

Do not affect
With mortal attributes the living Gods.
For holiness is as a veil to them
Concealing their affections.

PURURAVAS

This is true.
But why should she conceal her motherhood?

MANAVAKA

Plainly, she thought, "If the King sees me old
And matron, he'll be off with some young hussy."

PURURAVAS

No mockery, think it over.

MANAVAKA

Who shall guess
The riddles of the Gods?

(Enter Latavya)

LATAVYA

Hail to the King!
A holy dame from Chyavan's hermitage
Leading a boy would see my lord.

PURURAVAS

Latavya,
Admit them instantly.

LATAVYA

As the King wills.

*He goes out, then re-enters with Ayus bow in hand and
a hermitess.*

Come, holy lady, to the King.

They approach the King.

MANAVAKA

How say you,

Should not this noble boy be very he,
The young and high-born archer with whose name
Was lettered yon half-moon of steel that pierced
The vulture? His features imitate my lord's.

PURURAVAS

It must be so. The moment that I saw him,
My eyes became a mist of tears, my spirit
Lightened with joy, and surely 'twas a father
That stirred within my bosom. O Heaven! I lose
Religious calm; shudderings surprise me; I long
To feel him with my limbs, pressed with my love.

LATAVYA

(To the hermitess)

Here deign to stand.

PURURAVAS

Mother, I bow to thee.

SATYAVATIE

High-natured may thy line by thee increase!

(Aside)

Lo, all untold this father knows his son.

(Aloud)

My child,

Bow down to thy begetter.

Ayus bows down, folding his hands over his bow.

PURURAVAS

Live long, dear son.

AYUS

(Aside)

O how must children on their father's knees
Grown great be melted with a filial sweetness,

When only hearing that this is my father
I feel I love him!

PURURAVAS

Vouchsafe me, revered lady,
Thy need of coming.

SATYAVATIE

Listen then, O King;

This Ayus at his birth was in my hand
By Urvasie, I know not why, delivered,
A dear deposit. Every perfect rite
And holiness unmaimed that princely boys
Must grow through, Chyavan's self, the mighty Sage,
Performed, and taught him letters, Scripture, arts—
Last, every warlike science.

PURURAVAS

O fortunate

In such a teacher!

SATYAVATIE

The children fared afield
Today for flowers, dry fuel, sacred grass,
And Ayus faring with them violated
The morals of the hermitage.

PURURAVAS

(*In alarm*)

O how?

SATYAVATIE

A vulture with a jag of flesh was merging
Into a tree-top when the boy levelled
His arrow at the bird.

PURURAVAS

(*Anxiously*)

And then?

SATYAVATIE

And then

The holy Sage, instructed of that slaughter,
Called me and bade, " Give back thy youthful trust
Into his mother's keeping." Therefore, sir,
Let me have audience with the lady.

PURURAVAS

Mother,

Deign to sit down one moment.

The hermitess takes the seat brought for her.

Noble Latavya,

Let Urvasie be summoned.

LATAVYA

It is done.

He goes out.

PURURAVAS

Child of thy mother, come, O come to me!
Let me feel my son! The touch of his own child,
They say, thrills all the father; let me know it.
Gladden me as the moonbeam melts the moonstone.

SATYAVATIE

Go, child, and gratify thy father's heart.

Ayus goes to the King and clasps his feet.

PURURAVAS

(Embracing the boy and seating him on his footstool)

This Brahmin is thy father's friend. Salute him,
And have no fear.

MANAVAKA

Why should he fear? I think

He grew up in the woods and must have seen
A mot of monkeys in the trees.

AYUS
(*Smiling*)

Hail, father.

MANAVAKA
Peace and prosperity walk with thee ever.
Latavya returns with Urvasie.

LATAVYA
This way, my lady.

URVASIE
Who is this quivered youth
Set on the footstool of the King? Himself
My monarch binds his curls into a crest!
Who should this be so highly favoured?
(*Seeing Satyavatie*)
Ah!

Satyavatie beside him tells me; it is
My Ayus. How he has grown!

PURURAVAS
(*Seeing Urvasie*)

O child, look up.
Lo, she who bore thee, with her whole rapt gaze
Grown mother, her veiled bosom heaving towards thee
And wet with sacred milk!

SATYAVATIE
Rise, son, and greet
Thy parent.

She goes with the boy to Urvasie.

URVASIE
I touch thy feet.

SATYAVATIE
Ever be near
Thy husband's heart.

AYUS

Mother, I bow to thee.

URVASIE

Child, be thy sire's delight. My lord and husband!

PURURAVAS

O welcome to the mother! sit thee here.

He makes her sit beside him.

SATYAVATIE

My daughter, lo, thine Ayus. He has learned

All lore, heroic armour now can wear.

I yield thee back before thy husband's eyes

Thy sacred trust. Discharge me. Each idle moment

Is a religious duty left undone.

URVASIE

It is so long since I beheld you, mother,

I have not satisfied my thirst of you,

And cannot let you go. And yet 'twere wrong

To keep you. Therefore go for further meeting.

PURURAVAS

Say to the Sage, I fall down at his feet.

SATYAVATIE

'Tis well.

AYUS

Are you going to the forest, mother?

Will you not take me with you?

PURURAVAS

Over, son,

Thy studies in the woods. Thou must be now

A man, know the great world.

SATYAVATIE

Child, hear thy father.

AYUS

Then, mother, let me have when he has got
His plumes, my little peacock, Jewel-crest,
Who'd sleep upon my lap and let me stroke
His crest and pet him.

SATYAVATIE

Surely, I will send him.

URVASIE

Mother, I touch thy feet.

PURURAVAS

I bow to thee,

Mother.

SATYAVATIE

Peace be upon you both, my children.

She goes.

PURURAVAS

O blessed lady! Now I am grown through thee
A glorious father in this boy, our son;
Not Indra, hurler down of cities, more
In his Jayanta of Paulomie born.

Urvsie weeps.

MANAVAKA

Why is my lady suddenly all tears?

PURURAVAS

My own beloved! How art thou full of tears
While I am swayed with the great joy of princes
Who see their line secured? Why do these drops
On these high peaks of beauty raining down,
O sad sweet prodigal, turn thy bright necklace
To repetition vain of costlier pearls?

He wipes the tears from her eyes.

URVASIE

Alas, my lord! I had forgot my doom
 In a mother's joy. But now thy utterance
 Of that great name of Indra brings to me
 Cruel remembrance torturing the heart
 Of my sad limit.

PURURAVAS

Tell me, my love, what limit.

URVASIE

O King, my heart held captive in thy hands,
 I stood bewildered by the curse; then Indra
 Uttered his high command: "When my great soldier,
 Earth's monarch, sees the face that keeps his line
 Made in thy womb, to Eden thou returnest."
 So when I knew my issue, sick with the terror
 Of being torn from thee, all hidden haste,
 I gave to noble Satyavatie the child,
 In Chyavan's forest to be trained. Today
 This my beloved son returns to me;
 No doubt she thought that he was grown and able
 To gratify his father's heart. This then
 Is the last hour of that sweet life with thee,
 Which goes not farther.

Pururavas swoons.

MANAVAKA

Help, help!

URVASIE

Return to me, my King!

PURURAVAS

(Reviving)

O love, how jealous are the Gods in Heaven
 Of human gladness! I was comforted
 With getting of a son—at once this blow!

O small sweet waist, I am divorced from thee!
So has a poplar from one equal cloud
Received the shower that cooled and fire of Heaven
That kills it.

MANAVAKA

O sudden evil out of good!
For I suppose you now will don the bark
And live with hermit trees.

URVASIE

I too unhappy!
For now my King who sees that I no sooner
Behold my son reared up than to my Heavens
I soar, will think that I have all my need
And go with glad heart from his side.

PURURAVAS

Beloved,
Do not believe it. How can one be free
To do his will who's subject to a master?
He when he's bid, must cast his heart aside
And dwell in exile from the face he loves.
Therefore obey King Indra. On this thy son
I too my kingdom will repose and dwell
In forests where the antlered peoples roam.

AYUS

My father should not on an untrained steer
Impose the yoke that asks a neck of iron.

PURURAVAS

Child, say not so! The ichorous elephant
Not yet full-grown tames all the trumpeting
Of older rivals; and the young snake's tooth
With energy of virulent poison stored
Strikes deadly. So is it with the ruler born:
His boyish hand inarms the sceptred world.

The force that rises with its task springs not
From years, but is a self and inborn greatness.
Therefore, Latavya!

LATAVYA

Let my lord command me.

PURURAVAS

Direct from me the council to make ready
The coronation of my son.

LATAVYA

(Sorrowfully)

It is

Your will, sire.

He goes out. Suddenly all act as if dazzled.

PURURAVAS

What lightning leaps from cloudless Heavens?

URVASIE

(Gazing up)

'Tis the Lord Narad.

PURURAVAS

Narad? Yes, 'tis he.

His hair is matted all a tawny yellow
Like ochre-streaks, his holy thread is white
And brilliant like a digit of the moon.
He looks as if the faery-tree of Heaven
Came moving, shooting twigs all gold, and twinkling
Pearl splendours for its leaves, its tendrils pearl.
Guest-offering for the Sage!

Narad enters: all rise to greet him.

URVASIE

Here is guest-offering.

NARAD

Hail, the great guardian of the middle world!

PURURAVAS

Greeting, Lord Narad.

URVASIE

Lord, I bow to thee.

NARAD

Unsundered live in sweetness conjugal.

PURURAVAS

(*Aside*)

O that it might be so!

(*Aloud to Ayus*)

Child, greet the Sage.

AYUS

Urvaseian Ayus bows down to thee.

NARAD

Live long, be prosperous.

PURURAVAS

Deign to take this seat.

Narad sits, after which all take their seats.

What brings the holy Narad?

NARAD

Hear the message

Of mighty Indra.

PURURAVAS

I listen.

NARAD

Maghavan,

Whose soul can see across the world, to thee

Intending loneliness in woods—

PURURAVAS

Command me.

NARAD

The seers to whom the present, past and future
Are three wide-open pictures, these divulge
Advent of battle and the near uprise
Of Titans warring against Gods. Heaven needs
Thee, her great soldier; thou shouldst not lay down
Thy warlike arms. All thy allotted days
This Urvasie is given thee for wife
And lovely helpmeet.

URVASIE

Oh, a sword is taken
Out of my heart.

PURURAVAS

In all I am Indra's servant.

NARAD

'Tis fitting. Thou for Indra, he for thee,
With interchange of lordly offices.
So sun illumines the fire, fire the great sun
Ekes out with heat and puissance.

He looks up into the sky.

Rambha, descend

And with thee bring the high investiture
Heaven's King has furnished to crown Ayus, heir
Of great Pururavas.

Apsaras enter with the articles of investiture.

NYMPHS

Lo! Holiness,

That store!

NARAD

Set down the boy upon the chair
Of the anointing.

RAMBHA

Come to me, my child.

She seats the boy.

NARAD

(Pouring the cruse of holy oil on the boy's head)
Complete the ritual.

RAMBHA

(After so doing)
Bow before the Sage,
My child, and touch thy parents' feet.

Ayus obeys.

NARAD

Be happy.

PURURAVAS

Son, be a hero and thy line's upholder.

URVASIE

Son, please thy father.

BARDS

(Within)

Victory to Empire's heir.

STROPHE

First the immortal seer of Brahma's kind
And had the soul of Brahma; Atri's then
The Moon his child; and from the Moon again
Sprang Budha-Hermes, moonlike was his mind.
Pururavas was Budha's son and had
Like starry brightness. Be in thee displayed
Thy father's kindly gifts. All things that bless
Mortals, descend in thy surpassing race.

ANTISTROPHE

Thy father like Himaloy highest stands
Of all the high, but thou all steadfast be,
Unchangeable and grandiose like the sea,
Fearless, surrounding Earth with godlike hands.
Let Empire by division brighter shine;
For so the sacred Ganges snow and pine

Favours, yet the same waters she divides
To Ocean and his vast and heaving tides.

NYMPHS

(Approaching Urvasie)

O thou art blest, our sister, in thy son
Crowned heir to Empire, in thy husband blest
From whom thou shalt not part.

URVASIE

My happiness

Is common to you all, sweet sisters: such
Our love was always.

She takes Ayus by the hand.

Come with me, dear child,
To fall down at thy elder mother's feet.

PURURAVAS

Stay yet; we all attend you to the Queen.

NARAD

Thy son's great coronation mindeth me
Of yet another proud investiture—
Kartikeya crowned by Maghavan, to lead
Heaven's armies.

PURURAVAS

Highly has the King of Heaven
Favoured him, Narad; how should he not be
Most great and fortunate?

NARAD

What more shall Indra do
For King Pururavas?

PURURAVAS

Heaven's King being pleased,
What further can I need? Yet this I'll ask.

He comes forward and speaks towards the audience.
Learning and Fortune, Goddesses that stand

In endless opposition, dwellers rare
Under one roof, in kindly union join
To bless for glory and for ease the good.
This too; may every man find his own good,
And every man be merry of his mind,
And all men in all lands taste all desire.

BAJI PRABHOU
~~~~~



## Baji Prabhou

A noon of Deccan with its tyrant glare  
Oppressed the earth; the hills stood deep in haze,  
And sweltering athirst the fields glared up  
Longing for water in the courses parched  
Of streams long dead. Nature and man alike,  
Imprisoned by a bronze and brilliant sky,  
Sought an escape from that wide trance of heat.  
Nor on rare herdsman only or patient hind  
Tilling the earth or tending sleeplessly  
The well-eared grain that burden fell. It hung  
Upon the Mogul horsemen as they rode  
With lances at the charge, the surf of steel  
About them and behind, as they recoiled  
Or circled, where the footmen ran and fired,  
And fired again and ran; "For now at last,"  
They deemed, "the war is over, now at last  
The panther of the hills is beaten back  
Right to his lair, the rebel crew to death  
Is hunted, and an end is made at last."  
Therefore they stayed not for the choking dust,  
The slaying heat, the thirst of wounds and fight,  
The stumbling stark fatigue, but onward pressed  
With glowing eyes. Far otherwise the foe,  
Panting and sore oppressed and racked with thirst  
And blinded with the blazing earth who reeled  
Backward to Raigurh, moistening with their blood  
Their mother, and felt their own beloved hills  
A nightmare hell of death and heat, the sky  
A mute and smiling witness of their dire

Anguish,—abandoned now of God and man,  
 Who for their country and their race had striven,—  
 In vain, it seemed. At morning when the sun  
 Was yet below the verge, the Bhonsle sprang  
 At a high mountain fortress, hoping so  
 To clutch the whole wide land into his grasp;  
 But from the North and East the Moguls poured,  
 Swords numberless and hooves that shook the hills  
 And barking of a hundred guns. These bore  
 The hero backward. Silently with set  
 And quiet faces grim drew fighting back  
 The strong Mahrattas to their hills; only  
 Their rear sometimes with shouted slogan leaped  
 At the pursuer's throat, or on some rise  
 Or covered vantage stayed the Mogul flood  
 A moment. Ever foremost where men fought,  
 Was Baji Prabhou seen, like a wild wave  
 Of onset or a cliff against the surge.  
 At last they reached a tiger-throated gorge  
 Upon the way to Raigurh. Narrowing there  
 The hills draw close, and their forbidding cliffs  
 Threaten the prone incline. The Bhonsle paused,  
 His fiery glance travelled in one swift gyre  
 Hill, gorge and valley and with speed returned  
 Mightily like an eagle on the wing  
 To a dark youth beside him, Malsure  
 The younger, with his bright and burning eyes,  
 Who wordless rode quivering, as on the leash;  
 His fierce heart hungered for the rear, where Death  
 Was singing mid the laughter of the swords.  
 "Ride, Suryaji," the Chieftain cried, his look  
 Inward, intent, "and swiftly from the rear  
 Summon the Prabhou." Turning at the word  
 Suryaji's hooves sped down the rock-strewn slope  
 Into the trenchant valley's depth. Swiftly,

Though burdened with a nation's fate, the ridge  
 They reached, where in stern silence fought and fell,  
 Their iron hearts broken with desperate toil,  
 The Southron rear, and to the Prabhou gave  
 The summons of the Chief; " Ride, Baji, ride,  
 The Bhonsle names thee, Baji." And Baji spoke  
 No word, but stormed with loose and streaming rein  
 To the high frowning gorge and silent paused  
 Before the leader. " Baji, more than once  
 In battle thou hast stood, a living shield,  
 Between me and the foe. But more today,  
 O Baji, save than any single life,—  
 Thy nation's destiny. Thou seest this gorge  
 Narrow and fell and gleaming like the throat  
 Of some huge tiger, with its rocky fangs  
 Agrin for food: and though the lower slope  
 Descends too gently, yet with roots and stones  
 It is hampered, and the higher prone descent  
 Impregably forbids assault; too steep  
 The sides for any to ascend and shoot  
 From vantage. Here might lion-hearted men,  
 Though few, delay a host. Baji, I speed  
 To Raigurh and in two brief hours return.  
 Say with what force thy iron heart can hold  
 The passage till I come. Thou seest our strength,  
 How it has melted like the Afghan's ice  
 Into a pool of blood." And while he paused  
 Who had been chosen, spoke an iron man  
 With iron brows who rode behind the Chief,  
 Tanaji Malsure, that living sword:  
 " Not for this little purpose was there need  
 To call the Prabhou from his toil. Enough,  
 Give me five hundred men; I hold the pass  
 Till thy return." But Shivaji kept still

His great and tranquil look upon the face  
Of Baji Prabhou. Then, all black with wrath,  
Wrinkling his fierce hard eyes, the Malsure:  
“What ponders then the hero? Such a man  
Of men, he needs not like us petty swords  
A force behind him, but alone will hold  
All Rajasthan and Agra and Cabool  
From rise to set.” And Baji answered him:  
“Tanaji Malsure, not in this living net  
Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind  
Is a man’s manhood seated. God within  
Rules us, who in the Brahmin and the dog  
Can, if He will, show equal godhead. Not  
By men is mightiness achieved; Baji  
Or Malsure is but a name, a robe,  
And covers One alone. We but employ  
Bhavani’s strength, who in an arm of flesh  
Is mighty as in the thunder and the storm.  
I ask for fifty swords.” And Malsure:  
“Well, Baji, I will build thee such a pyre  
As man had never yet, when we return;  
For all the Deccan brightening shall cry out,  
Baji the Prabhou burns!” And with a smile  
The Prabhou answered: “Me thou shalt not burn.  
For this five feet or more of bone and flesh,  
Whether pure flame or jackals of the hills  
Be fattened with its rags, may well concern  
Others, not Baji Prabhou.” And the Chief  
With a high calmness in his shining look,  
“We part, O friend, but meet again we must,  
When from our tasks released we both shall run  
Like children to our Mother’s clasp.” He took  
From his wide brow the princely turban sown  
With aigrette diamond-crowned and on the head  
Of Baji set the gleaming sign, then clasped

His friend and, followed by the streaming host  
 That gathered from the rear, to farther hills  
 Rode clattering. By the Mogul van approached  
 Baji and his Mahrattas sole remained  
 Watched by the mountains in the silent gorge.

Small respite had the slender band who held  
 Fate constant with that brittle hoop of steel;  
 For like the crest of an arriving wave  
 The Moslem van appeared, though slow and tired,  
 Yet resolute to break such barrier faint,  
 And forced themselves to run:—nor long availed;  
 For with a single cry the muskets spoke,  
 Once and again and always, as they neared,  
 And, like a wave arrested, for a while  
 The assailants paused and like a wave collapsed  
 Spent backward in a cloud of broken spray,  
 Retreating. Yielding up, the dangerous gorge  
 Saw only on the gnarled and stumbling rise  
 The dead and wounded heaped. But from the rear  
 The main tremendous onset of the North  
 Came in a dark and undulating surge  
 Regardless of the check,—a mingled mass,  
 Pathan and Mogul and the Rajput clans,  
 All clamorous with the brazen throats of war  
 And spitting smoke and fire. The bullets rang  
 Upon the rocks, but in their place unhurt,  
 Sheltered by tree and rock, the silent grim  
 Defenders waited, till on root and stone  
 The confident high-voiced triumphant surge  
 Began to break, to stumble, then to pause,  
 Confusion in its narrowed front. At once  
 The muskets clamoured out, the bullets sped,



Deadly though few; again and yet again,  
 And some of the impetuous faltered back  
 And some in wrath pressed on; and while they swayed  
 Poised between flight and onset, blast on blast  
 The volleyed death invisible hailed in  
 Upon uncertain ranks. The leaders fell,  
 The forward by the bullets chosen out,  
 Prone or supine or leaning like sick men  
 O'er trees and rocks, distressed the whole advance  
 With prohibition by the silent slain.  
 So the great onset failed. And now withdrawn  
 The generals consulted, and at last  
 In slow and ordered ranks the foot came on,  
 An iron resolution in their tread,  
 Hushed and deliberate. Far in the van,  
 Tall and large-limbed, a formidable array,  
 The Pathan infantry; a chosen force,  
 Lower in crest, strong-framed, the Rajputs marched;  
 The chivalry of Agra led the rear.  
 Then Baji first broke silence, "Lo, the surge!  
 That was but spray of death we first repelled.  
 Chosen of Shivaji, Bhavani's swords,  
 For you the gods prepare. We die indeed,  
 But let us die with the high-voiced assent  
 Of Heaven to our country's claim enforced  
 To freedom." As he spoke, the Mogul lines  
 Entered the menacing wide-throated gorge,  
 Carefully walking, but not long that care  
 Endured, for where they entered, there they fell.  
 Others behind in silence stern advanced.  
 They came, they died; still on the previous dead  
 New dead fell thickening. Yet by paces slow  
 The lines advanced with labour infinite  
 And merciless expense of valiant men.  
 For even as the slopes were filled and held,

Still the velocity and lethal range  
 Increased of the Mahratta bullets; dead  
 Rather than living held the conquered slope,—  
 The living who, half-broken, paused. Abridged,  
 Yet wide, the interval opposed advance,  
 Daunting those resolute natures; eyes once bold  
 With gloomy hesitation reckoned up  
 The dread equivalent in human lives  
 Of cubits and of yards, and hardly hoped  
 One could survive the endless unacquired  
 Country between. But from the Southron wall  
 The muskets did not hesitate, but urged  
 Refusal stern; the bullets did not pause,  
 Nor calculate expense. Active they thronged  
 Humming like bees and stung strong lives to death  
 Making a holiday of carnage. Then  
 The heads that planned pushed swiftly to the front  
 The centre yet unhurt, where Rajasthan,  
 Playmate of death, had sent her hero sons.  
 They with a rapid royal reckless pace  
 Came striding over the perilous fire-swept ground,  
 Nor answered uselessly the bullets thick  
 Nor paused to judge, but o'er the increasing dead  
 Leaping and striding, shouting, sword in hand,  
 Rushed onward with immortal courage high  
 In mortal forms, and held the lower slope.  
 But now the higher incline, short but steep,  
 Baffled their speed, and as they clambered up,  
 Compact and fiery, like the rapid breath  
 Of Agra's hot simoom, the sheeted flame  
 Belched bullets. Down they fell with huge collapse,  
 And, rolling, with their shock drove back the few  
 Who still attempted. Banned advance, retreat  
 Threatening disgrace and slaughter, for a while

Like a bound sacrifice the Rajputs stood  
 Diminishing each moment. Then a lord  
 High-crested of the Rathore clan stood out  
 From the perplexed assailants, with his sword  
 Beckoning the thousands on against the few.  
 And him the bullets could not touch; he stood  
 Defended for a moment by his lease  
 Not yet exhausted. And a mighty shout  
 Rose from behind, and in a violent flood  
 The Rajputs flung themselves on the incline  
 Like clambering lions. Many hands received  
 The dead as they descended, flinging back  
 Those mournful obstacles, and with a rush  
 The lead surmounted and on level ground  
 Stood sword in hand; yet only for a while,—  
 For grim and straight the slogan of the South  
 Leaped with the fifty swords to thrust them back,  
 Baji the Prabhou leading. Thrice they came,  
 Three times prevailed, three times the Southron charge  
 Repelled them; till at last the Rathore lord,  
 As one appointed, led the advancing death,  
 Nor waited to assure his desperate hold,  
 But hurled himself on Baji; those behind  
 Bore forward those in front. From right and left  
 Mahratta muskets rang their music out  
 And withered the attack that, still dissolved,  
 Still formed again from the insistent rear  
 And would not end. So was the fatal gorge  
 Filled with the clamour of the close-locked fight.  
 Sword rang on sword, the slogan shout, the cry  
 Of guns, the hiss of bullets filled the air,  
 And murderous strife heaped up the scanty space,  
 Rajput and strong Mahratta breathing hard  
 In desperate battle. But far off the hosts  
 Of Agra stood arrested, confident,

Waiting the end. Far otherwise it came  
 Than they expected. For, as in the front  
 The Rathore stood on the disputed verge  
 And ever threw fresh strength into the scale  
 With that inspiring gesture, Baji came  
 Towards him singling out the lofty crest,  
 The princely form: and, as the waves divide  
 Before a driving keel, the battle so  
 Before him parted, till he neared, he slew.  
 Avoiding sword, avoiding lifted arm  
 The blade surprised the Rajput's throat, and down  
 As falls an upright poplar, with his hands  
 Outspread, dying, he clutched Mahratta ground.  
 Loud rose the slogan as he fell. Amazed,  
 The eager hosts of Agra saw reel back  
 The Rajput battle, desperate victory  
 Turned suddenly into entire defeat,  
 Not headlong, but with strong discouragement,  
 Sullen, convinced, rejecting the emprise.  
 As they retired, the brilliant Pathan van  
 Assumed the attempt. "Exhaust," the generals cried,  
 "Exhaust the stubborn mountaineers; for now  
 Fatigued with difficult effort and success  
 They hardly stand, weary, unstrung, inert.  
 Scatter this fringe, and we march on and seize  
 Raigurh and Shivaji." Meanwhile, they too  
 Not idle, covered by the rocks and trees,  
 Straining for vantage, pausing on each ledge,  
 Seizing each bush, each jutting promontory,  
 Some iron muscles, climbing, of the south  
 Lurked on the gorge's gloomy walls unseen.  
 On came the Pathans running rapidly,  
 But as the nearest left the rocky curve  
 Where lurked the ambush, loud from stone and tree  
 The silence spoke; sideways, in front, behind

Death clamoured, and tall figures strewed the ground  
 Like trees in a cyclone. Appalled the rest  
 Broke this way and broke that, and some cried, "On!"  
 Some shouted, "Back!" for those who led, fell fast.  
 So the advance dissolved, divided,—the more  
 In haste towards the plains, greeted with death  
 Even while they ran; but others forward, full  
 Of panic courage, drove towards the foe  
 They could not reach,—so hot a blast and fell  
 Stayed their unsteady valour, their retreat  
 So swift and obstinate a question galled,  
 Few through the hail survived. With gloom their chiefs  
 Beheld the rout and drawing back their hosts  
 In dubious council met, whether to leave  
 That gorge of slaughter unredeemed or yet  
 Demand the price of so immense a loss.

But to the Prabhou came with anxious eyes  
 The Captain of the band. "Baji," he cried,  
 "The bullets fail; all the great store we had  
 Of shot and powder by unsparing use  
 Is spent, is ended." And Baji Prabhou turned.  
 One look he cast upon the fallen men  
 Discernible by their attire, and saw  
 His ranks not greatly thinned, one look below  
 Upon the hundreds strewing thick the gorge,  
 And grimly smiled; then where the sun in fire  
 Descending stooped, towards the vesper verge  
 He gazed and cried: "Make iron of your souls.  
 Yet if Bhavani wills, strength and the sword  
 Can stay our nation's future from o'erthrow  
 Till victory with Shivaji return."  
 And so they waited without word or sound,  
 And over them the silent afternoon

Waited; the hush terrestrial was profound,  
Except the mountains and the fallen men  
No sight, no voice, no movement was abroad,  
Only a few black-winged slow-circling birds  
That wandered in the sky, only the wind  
That now arose and almost noiselessly  
Questioned the silence of the wooded sides,  
Only the occasional groan that marked the pang  
By some departing spirit on its frame  
Inflicted. And from time to time the gaze  
Of Baji sought the ever-sinking sun.  
Men fixed their eyes on him and in his firm  
Expression lived. So the slow minutes passed.  
But when the sun dipped very low, a stir  
Was felt far off, and all men grasped the hilt  
Tighter and put a strain upon their hearts.  
Resolved at last the stream of Mogul war  
Came once more pouring, not the broken rout  
Of Pathans, not discouraged Rajput swords,  
But Agra's chivalry glancing with gold  
And scimitars inlaid and coloured robes.  
Swiftly they came expecting the assault  
Fire-winged of bullets and the lethal rain,  
But silence met them and to their intent  
So ominous it seemed, a while they paused,  
Fearing some ruse, though for much death prepared,  
Yet careful of prevention. Reassured,  
Onward with a high shout they charged the slope.  
No bullet sped, no musket spoke; unhurt  
They crossed the open space, unhurt they climbed  
The rise; but even as their hands surprised  
The shrubs that fringed the vantage, swords unseen  
Hacked at their fingers, through the bushes thrust  
Lances from warriors unexposed bore through  
Their bosoms. From behind the nearest lines

Pressed on to share their fate, and still the sea  
Of men bore onward till with violent strain  
They reached the perilous crest; there for a while  
A slaughter grim went on and all the verge  
Was heaped and walled and thickly fortified  
With splendid bodies. But as they were piled,  
The raging hosts behind tore down their dead  
And mounted, till at last the force prevailed  
Of obstinate numbers and upon a crest  
Swarming with foemen fought 'gainst desperate odds  
The Southron few. Small was the space for fight,  
And meeting strength with skill and force with soul  
The strong and agile keepers of the hills  
Prevailed against the city-dwelling hosts,  
With covert and the swiftly stabbing blades  
O'erpowering all the feints of Agra's schools.  
So fought they for a while; then suddenly  
Upon the Prabhou all the Goddess came.  
Loud like a lion hungry on the hills  
He shouted, and his stature seemed to increase  
Striding upon the foe. Rapid his sword  
Like lightning playing with a cloud made void  
The crest before him, on his either side  
The swordsmen of the South with swift assault  
Preventing the reply, till like a bank  
Of some wild river the assault collapsed  
Over the stumbling edge and down the rise,  
And once again the desperate moment passed.  
The relics of the murderous strife remained,  
Corpses and jewels, broidery and gold.  
But not for this would they accept defeat.  
Once more they came and almost held. Then wrath  
Rose in the Prabhou and he raised himself  
In soul to make an end; but even then  
A stillness fell upon his mood and all

That godlike impulse faded from his heart,  
 And passing out of him a mighty form  
 Stood visible, Titanic, scarlet-clad,  
 Dark as a thunder-cloud, with streaming hair  
 Obscuring heaven, and in her sovran grasp  
 The sword, the flower, the boon, the bleeding head,—  
 Bhavani. Then she vanished; the daylight  
 Was ordinary in a common world.  
 And Baji knew the goddess formidable  
 Who watches over India till the end.  
 Even then a sword found out his shoulder, sharp  
 A Mogul lance ran grinding through his arm.  
 Fiercely around him gathered in a knot  
 The mountaineers; but Baji, with a groan,  
 “Moro Deshpande, to the other side  
 Hasten of the black gorge and bring me word.  
 Rides any from the West, or canst thou hear  
 The Raigurh trumpets blow? I know my hour  
 Is ended; let me know my work is done.”  
 He spoke and shouted high the slogan loud.  
 Desperate, he laboured in his human strength  
 To push the Mogul from the gorge’s end  
 With slow compulsion. By his side fell fast  
 Mahratta and Mogul and on his limbs  
 The swords drank blood, a single redness grew  
 His body, yet he fought. Then at his side  
 Ghastly with wounds and in his fiery eyes  
 Death and rejoicing a dire figure stood,  
 Moro Deshpande. “Baji, I have seen  
 The Raigurh lances; Baji, I have heard  
 The trumpets.” Conquering with his cry the din  
 He spoke, then dead upon a Mogul corpse  
 Fell prone. And Baji with a gruesome hand  
 Wiping the blood from his fierce staring eyes  
 Saw round him only fifteen men erect



Of all his fifty. But in front, behind,  
 On either side the Mogul held the gorge.  
 Groaning, once more the grim Mahratta turned  
 And like a bull with lowered horns that runs,  
 Charged the exultant foe behind. With him  
 The desperate survivors hacking ran,  
 And as a knife cuts instantly its way  
 Through water, so the yielding Mogul wall  
 Was cleft and closed behind. Eight men alone  
 Stood in the gorge's narrow end, not one  
 Unwounded. There where hardly three abreast  
 Have room to stand, they faced again the foe;  
 And from this latest hold Baji beheld  
 Mounting the farther incline, rank on rank,  
 A mass of horsemen; galloped far in front  
 Some forty horse, and on a turbaned head  
 Bright in the glory of the sinking sun  
 A jewelled aigrette blazed. And Baji looked  
 Over the wide and yawning field of space  
 And seemed to see a fort upon a ridge,  
 Raigurh; then turned and sought again the war.  
 So for few minutes desperately they strove.  
 Man after man of the Mahrattas fell  
 Till only three were left. Then suddenly  
 Baji stood still and sank upon the ground.  
 Quenched was the fiery gaze, nerveless the arm:  
 Baji lay dead in the unconquered gorge.  
 But ere he fell, upon the rocks behind  
 The horse-hooves rang and, as the latest left  
 Of the half hundred died, the bullets thronged  
 Through the too narrow mouth and hurled those down  
 Who entered. Clamorous, exultant blared  
 The Southron trumpets, but with stricken hearts  
 The swords of Agra back recoiled; fatal  
 Upon their serried unprotected mass

In hundreds from the verge the bullets rained,  
And in a quick disordered stream, appalled,  
The Mogul rout began. Sure-footed, swift  
The hostile strength pursued, Suryaji first  
Shouting aloud and singing to the hills  
A song of Ramdas as he smote and slew.  
But Shivaji by Baji's empty frame  
Stood silent and his gaze was motionless  
Upon the dead. Tanaji Malsure  
Stood by him and observed the breathless corpse,  
Then slowly said, "Thirty and three the gates  
By which thou enterest heaven, thou fortunate soul,  
Thou valiant heart. So when my hour arrives,  
May I too clasp my death, saving the land  
Or winning some great fortress for my lord."  
But Shivaji beside the dead beheld  
A dim and mighty cloud that held a sword  
And in its other hand, where once the head  
Depended bleeding, raised the turban bright  
From Baji's brows, still glittering with its gems,  
And placed it on the chief's. But as it rose  
Blood-stained with the heroic sacrifice,  
Round the aigrette he saw a golden crown.



## **NINE POEMS**



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## The Mother of Dreams

Goddess, supreme Mother of Dream, by thy ivory doors when thou  
standest,  
Who are they then that come down unto men in thy visions that  
troop, group upon group, down the path of the shadows  
slanting?  
Dream after dream, they flash and they gleam with the flame of  
the stars still around them;  
Shadows at thy side in a darkness ride where the wild fires dance,  
stars glow and glance and the random meteor glistens;  
There are voices that cry to their kin who reply; voices sweet,  
at the heart they beat and ravish the soul as it listens.  
What then are these lands and these golden sands and these seas  
more radiant than earth can imagine?  
Who are those that pace by the purple waves that race to the  
cliff-bound floor of thy jasper shore under skies in which  
mystery muses,  
Lapped in moonlight not of our night or plunged in sunshine that  
is not diurnal?  
Who are they coming thy Oceans roaming with sails whose  
strands are not made by hands, an unearthly wind advances?  
Why do they join in a mystic line with those on the sands linking  
hands in strange and stately dances?  
Thou in the air, with a flame in thy hair, the whirl of thy wonders  
watching,  
Holdest the night in thy ancient right, mother divine, hyacinth-  
ine, with a girdle of beauty defended.  
Sworded with fire, attracting desire, thy tenebrous kingdom  
thou keepest,



Starry-sweet, with the moon at thy feet, now hidden now seen  
     the clouds between in the gloom and the drift of thy tresses.  
 Only to those whom thy fancy chose, O thou heart-free, is it given  
     to see thy witchcraft and feel thy caresses.  
 Open the gate where thy children wait in their world of a beauty  
     undarkened.  
 High-throned on a cloud, victorious, proud I have espied  
     Maghavan ride when the armies of wind are behind him;  
 Food has been given for my tasting from heaven and fruit  
     of immortal sweetness;  
 I have drunk wine of the kingdoms divine and have heard the  
     change of music strange from a lyre which our hands cannot  
     master;  
 Doors have swung wide in the chambers of pride where the Gods  
     reside and the Apsaras dance in their circles faster and faster.  
 For thou art she whom we first can see when we pass the bounds  
     of the mortal,  
 There at the gates of the heavenly states thou hast planted thy  
     wand enchanted over the head of the Yogin waving.  
 From thee are the dream and the shadows that seem and the  
     fugitive lights that delude us;  
 Thine is the shade in which visions are made; sped by thy hands  
     from celestial lands come the souls that rejoice for ever.  
 Into thy dream-worlds we pass or look in thy magic glass, then  
     beyond thee we climb out of Space and Time to the peak of  
     divine endeavour.

## An Image

Rushing from Troy like a cloud on the plains the Trojans  
thundered,  
Just as a storm comes thundering, thick with the dust of  
kingdoms,  
Edged with the devious dance of the lightning, so all Troas  
Loud with the roar of the chariots, loud with the vaunt and the  
war-cry,  
Rushed from Troywards gleaming with spears and rolled on  
enormous.  
Joyous as ever Paris led them glancing in armour,  
Brilliant with gold like a bridegroom, playing with death and  
the battle  
Even as apart in his chamber he played with his beautiful Helen,  
Touching her body rejoiced with a low and lyrical laughter,  
So he laughed as he smote his foemen. Round him the arrows,  
Round him the spears of the Argives sang like the voices of  
maidens  
Trilling the anthem of bridal bliss, the chant hymeneal;  
Round him the warriors fell like flowers strewn at a bridal  
Red with the beauty of blood.

## The Birth of Sin

*Lucifer*                      *Sirioth*

*Lucifer*

What mighty and ineffable desire  
Impels thee, Sirioth? Thy accustomed calm  
Is potently subverted and the eyes  
That were a god's in sweet tranquillity,  
Confess a human warmth, a troubled glow.

*Sirioth*

Lucifer, son of Morning, Angel! thou  
Art mightiest of the architects of fate.  
To thee is given with thy magic gaze  
Compelling mortals as thou leanst sublime  
From heaven's lucent walls, to sway the world.  
Is thy felicity of lesser date,  
Prince of the patient and untiring gods,  
The gods who work? Dost thou not ever feel  
Angelic weariness usurp the place  
Where the great flame and the august desire  
Were wont to urge thee on? To me it seems  
That our eternity is far too long  
For service and there is a word, a thought,  
More godlike.

*Lucifer*

Sirioth, I will speak the word.  
Is it not Power?

*Sirioth*

No, Lucifer, 'tis Love.

*Lucifer*

Love? It was love that for a trillion years  
 Gave me the instinct and immense demand  
 For service, for activity. It fades.  
 Another and more giant passion comes  
 Striding upon me. I behold the world  
 Immeasurably vast, I see the heavens  
 Full of an azure joy and majesty,  
 I see the teeming millions of the stars.  
 Sirioth, how came the Master of the world  
 To be the master? Did He seize control  
 Pushing some ancient weaker sovereign down  
 From sway immemorable? Did He come  
 By peaceful ways, permission or inheritance,  
 To what He is today? Or if indeed  
 He is for ever and for ever rules,  
 Are there no bounds to His immense domain,  
 No obscure corner of unbounded space  
 Forgotten by His fate, that I may seize  
 And make myself an empire as august,  
 Enjoy a like eternity of rule?

*Sirioth*

Angel, these thoughts are mighty as thyself.  
 But wilt thou then rebel? If He be great  
 To conquer and to punish, what of thee?  
 Eternity of dreadful poignant pain.  
 May be thy fate and not eternal rule.

*Lucifer*

Better than still to serve desirelessly,  
 Pursued by a compulsion dull and fierce,

Looking through all vast time for one brief hour  
Or rest, of respite, but instead to find  
Iron necessity and pant in vain  
For space, for room, for freedom.

*Sirioth*

Thou intendest?

*Lucifer*

Sirioth, I do not yet intend; I feel.

*Sirioth*

For me the sense of active force within  
Set me to work, as the stars move, the sun  
Resistless flames through space, the stormwind runs.  
But I have felt a touch as sweet as spring,  
And I have heard a music of delight  
Maddening the heart with the sweet honied stabs  
Of delicate intolerable joy.  
Where, where is One to feel the answering bliss?  
Lucifer, thou from love beganst thy toil.  
What love?

*Lucifer*

Desire august to help, to serve.

*Sirioth*

That is not mine. To embrace, to melt and mix  
Two beings into one, to roll the spirit  
Tumbling into a surge of common joy,—  
'Tis this I seek.

*Lucifer*

Will He permit?

*Sirioth*

A bar

I feel, a prohibition. Some one used  
A word I could not grasp and called it sin.

*Lucifer*

The word is new, even as these things are.

*Sirioth*

I know not who he was. He laughed and said,  
"Sin, sin is born into the world, revolt  
And change, in Sirioth and in Lucifer,  
The evening and the morning star. Rejoice,  
O world!" And I beheld as in a dream  
Leaping from out thy brain and into mine  
A woman beautiful, of grandiose mien,  
Yet terrible, alarming and instinct  
With nameless menace. And the world was full  
With clashing and with cries. It seemed to me  
Angels and Gods and men strove violently  
To touch her robe, to occupy the place  
Her beautiful and ominous feet had trod,  
Crying, "Daughter of Lucifer, be ours,  
O sweet, adorable and mighty Sin!"  
Therefore I came to thee.

*Lucifer*

Sirioth, await  
Her birth, if she must be. For this I know,  
Necessity rules all the infinite world,  
And even He perhaps submits unknown  
To a compulsion. When the time is ripe,  
We will consult once more what we shall do.

## Epiphany

Majestic, mild, immortally august,  
 In silence throned, to just and to unjust  
 One Lord of deep unutterable love,  
 I saw Him, Shiva, like a brooding dove  
 Close-winged upon her nest. The outcaste came,  
 The sinners gathered round that tender Flame,  
 The demons, by the other sterner gods  
 Rejected from their luminous abodes,  
 Gathered around the Refuge of the lost  
 Soft-smiling on that wild and grisly host.  
 All who were refugeless, wretched, unloved,  
 The wicked and the good together moved  
 Naturally to Him, the asylum sweet,  
 And found their heaven at their Master's feet.  
 The vision changed and in his place there stood  
 A Terror red as lightning or as blood;  
 His fierce right hand a javelin advanced  
 And, as He shook it, earthquake reeling danced  
 Across the hemisphere, ruin and plague  
 Rained out of heaven, disasters swift and vague  
 Threatened, a marching multitude of ills.  
 His foot strode forward to oppress the hills,  
 And at the vision of His burning eyes  
 The hearts of men grew faint with dread surmise  
 Of sin and punishment; their cry was loud,  
 "O Master of the stormwind and the cloud,  
 Spare, Rudra, spare. Show us that other form  
 Auspicious, not incarnate wrath and storm."

The God of Wrath, the God of Love are one,  
Nor least He loves when most He smites. Alone  
Who rises above fear and plays with grief,  
Defeat and death, inherits full relief  
From blindness and beholds the single Form,  
Love masking Terror, Peace supporting storm.  
The Friend of Man helps him with Life and Death,  
Until he knows. Then freed from mortal breath  
He feels the joy of the immortal play;  
Grief, pain, resentment, terror pass away.  
He too grows Rudra fierce, august and dire,  
And Shiva, sweet fulfiller of desire.



## To R.

### *On Her Birthday.*

The repetition of thy gracious years  
    Brings back once more thy natal morn.  
Upon the crest of youth thy life appears,—  
    A wave upborne.

Amid the hundreds thronging Ocean's floor  
    A wave upon the crowded sea  
With regular rhythm pushing towards the shore  
    Our life must be.

The power that moves it is the Ocean's force  
    Invincible, eternal, free,  
And by that impulse it pursues its course  
    Inevitably.

We, too, by the Eternal Might are led  
    To whatsoever goal He wills.  
Our helm He grasps, our generous sail outspread  
    His strong breath fills.

Exulting in the grace and strength of youth  
    Pursue the Ocean's distant bound,  
Trusting the Pilot's voice, the Master's ruth  
    That rings us round.

Rejoice and fear not for the waves that swell,  
    The storms that thunder, winds that sweep;  
Always our Captain holds the rudder well,  
    He does not sleep.

If in the trough of the enormous sea  
    Thou canst not find the sky for spray,  
Fear never, for our Sun is there with thee  
    By night and day.

Even those who sink in the victorious flood,  
    Where do they sink? Into His breast.  
He who to some gives victory, joy and good,  
    To some gives rest.

But thou, look to the radiant days that wait  
    Beyond the driving rain and storm.  
I have seen the vision of a happier fate  
    Brightening thy form.

Confident of His grace, expect His will;  
    Let Him lead; though hidden be the bourne,  
See Him in all that happens; that fulfil  
    For which thou wert born.

## The Rakshasas

[The Rakshasa, the violent kinetic Ego, establishes his claim to mastery of the world replacing the animal Soul,—to be followed by controlled and intellectualised but unregenerated Ego, the Asura. Each such type and level of consciousness sees the Divine in its own image and its level in Nature is sustained by a differing form of the World-Mother]

“Glory and greatness and the joy of life,  
Strength, pride, victorious force, whatever man  
Desires, whatever the wild beast enjoys,  
Bodies of women and the lives of men—  
I claim to be my kingdom. I have force  
My title to substantiate, I seek  
No crown unearned, no lordship undeserved.  
Ask what austerity Thou wilt, Maker of man,  
Expense of blood or labour or long years  
Spent in tremendous meditation, lives  
Upon Thy altar spent of brutes or men;  
Or if with gold Thy favour purchasable,  
I may command rich offerings to glut  
Thy triumphs and Thy priests. I have a heart,  
A hand for any mighty sacrifice,  
A fiery patience in my vehement mood;  
I will submit. But ask not this of me,  
Meek silence and a pale imprisoned soul  
Made colourless of its humanity,  
Ask not the heart that quakes, the hand that spares,  
What strength can give, not weakness, that demand.  
O Rudra! O eternal Mahadev!  
Thou too art fierce and mighty, wrathful, bold,  
Snuffing Thy winds for blood of sacrifice  
And angrily Thou rul'st a prostrate world.

O Rákshasa Almighty, look on me,  
 Rávan, the lord of all Thy Rákshasas,  
 Give me Thy high command to smite Thy foes;  
 But most I would afflict, chase and destroy  
 Thy devotees who traduce Thee, making Thee  
 A God of Love, a God too sweet to rule.  
 I have the knowledge, what Thou art I know  
 And know myself, for Thou and I are one."  
 So prayed the Lord of Lanka, and in heaven  
 Sri Krishna smiled, the Friend of all mankind,  
 And asked, "O masters of the knowledge, Seers  
 Who help me by your thoughts to help mankind,  
 Harken what Rávan cries against the stars  
 Demanding earth for heritage. Advise,  
 Shall he then have it?" and a cry arose,  
 "He would root out the Brahmin from the earth,  
 Impose his dreadful Yoga on mankind  
 And make the violent heart, the iron hand  
 Sovereign of all." Sri Krishna made reply,  
 "From out Myself he went to do My will.  
 He has not lied, he has the knowledge. He  
 And I are one. How then shall I refuse?  
 Does it not say, the Veda that you know,  
 'When one knows That, then whatso he desires,  
 It shall be his?' And Atri sage replied,  
 "Let him then rule a season and be slain."  
 And He who reigns, "Something you know, O Seers,  
 Not all my purpose. It is long decreed,  
 The Rákshasa shall rule the peopled earth.  
 He takes the brute into himself for man  
 Yielding it offerings, while with grandiose thoughts  
 And violent aspirations he controls;  
 He purifies the demon in the race  
 Slaying in wrath, not cruelty. Awhile

He puts the Vánara out of the world,  
 Accustoming to grandeur all mankind;  
 The Ifrit\* he rejects. Were he denied  
 His period, man could not progress. But since  
 He sees himself as Me, not Me in him,  
 And takes the life and body for the whole,  
 He cannot last. Therefore is Atri's word  
 Accepted." And before the Rákshasa,  
 Out of the terror of the sacrifice,  
 Naked and dark, with a blood-dripping sword  
 And dreadful eyes that seemed to burn the world,  
 Kálí the Rákshasí in flames arose.  
 "Demand a boon," she cried, and all the gods  
 Trembled. "Give me the earth for my delight,  
 Her gods to be my slaves" the Rákshasa cried,  
 "Of strength and pride." "So let it be,"  
 She answered. "Shall it be eternal then?"  
 Rávan demanded and she thundered, "No,  
 For neither thou nor I are best nor last.  
 The Asurí shall arise to fill my place,  
 The Asura thy children shall dethrone.  
 An æon thou hast taken to evolve,  
 An æon thou shalt rule. But since thy wish  
 I have denied, ask yet another boon."  
 "Let this be mine then, when at last I sink,  
 Nor brute nor demon, man nor Titan's hand,  
 Nor any lesser creature shall o'erthrow,  
 But only God himself compel my fall."  
 And Kálí answered, smiling terribly,  
 "It is decreed," and laughing loud she passed.  
 Then Rávan from his sacrifice arose.

\*The Ifrit, the Djinn, is the demoniac element in Nature.

## Kama

[According to one idea Desire is the creator and sustainer of things,— Desire and Ignorance. By losing desire one passes beyond the Ignorance, as by passing beyond Ignorance one loses desire; then the created world is surpassed and the soul enters into the Divine Reality. Kama here speaks as Desire the Creator, an outgoing power from the Bliss of the Divine Reality to which, abandoning desire, one returns, *ānandam brahmaṇo vidvān*, possessing the bliss of the Brahman.]

O desolations vast, O seas of space  
 Unpeopled, realms of an unfertile light,  
 Grow multitudinous with living forms,  
 Enamoured of desire! I send My breath  
 Into the heart of being and the storm  
 Of sweet attraction shall break up its calm  
 With quivering passionate intensity,  
 And silence change to a melodious cry,  
 And all the world be rose. Out of my heart  
 Suns shall flame up into the pitiless void  
 And the stars wheel in magic dances round  
 Weaving the web of mortal life. For I  
 Am love, am passion. I create the world.  
 I am the only Brahma. My desire  
 Takes many forms; I change and wheel and race  
 And with me runs creation. I preserve,  
 For I am love. I weary of myself,  
 And the world circles back into the Vast.  
 Delight and laughter walking hand in hand  
 Go with me, and I play with grief and pain.  
 I am the dance of Krishna, I the dance  
 Of Kálí, Might and Majesty are mine.  
 And I can make the heart a child at play,

The soul of things a woman full of bliss.  
Hunger and Thirst, arise and make the world!  
Delight, go down and give it strength to live!  
O ether, change! O breath of things, grow full  
Of the perpetual whirl! Break out, O fire,  
In seas of magic colour, infinite waves  
Of rainbow light! Thou liquid element,  
Be sap, be taste in all created things  
To please the senses. Thou, O solid earth,  
Enter into all life, support the worlds.  
I send forth joy to cheer the hearts of men,  
I send forth law to harmonise and rule.  
And when these things are done, when men have learned  
My beauty, My desirability, My bliss,  
I will conceal myself from their desire  
And make this rule of the eternal chase,  
“They who abandon Me, shall to all time  
Clasp and possess; they who pursue, shall lose.”

## The Mahatmas

### KUTHUMI

[This poem is purely a play of the imaginative, a poetic reconstruction of the central idea only of Mahatmahood.]

The seven mountains and the seven seas  
 Surround me. Over me the eightfold Sun  
 Blazing with various colours—green and blue,  
 Scarlet and rose, violet and gold and white,  
 And the dark disk that rides in the mortal cave—  
 Looks down on me in flame. Below spread wide  
 The worlds of the immortals, tier on tier  
 Like a great mountain climbing to the skies,  
 And on their summit Shiva dwells. Of old  
 My doings were familiar with the earth,  
 The mortals over whom I hold control  
 Were then my fellows. But I followed not  
 The usual path, the common thoughts of men.  
 A thirst of knowledge and a sense of power,  
 A passion of divine beneficence  
 Pursued me through a hundred lives. I rose  
 From birth to birth, until I reached the peak  
 Of human knowledge, then in Bharat born,  
 I, Kuthumi, the Kshatriya, the adept,  
 The mighty Yogin of Dwaipayana's school,  
 To Vyāsa came, our great original sage.  
 He looked upon me with the eyes that see  
 And smiled august and awful. "Kuthumi,"  
 He cried, "now gather back what thou hast earned  
 In many lives, remember all thy past,



Cease from thy round of human births, resume  
 The eightfold powers that make a man as God.  
 Then come again and learn thy grandiose work,  
 For thou art of the souls to death denied.”  
 I went into the mountains by the sea  
 That thunders pitilessly from night to morn,  
 And sung to by that rude relentless sound  
 Amidst the cries of beasts, the howl of winds,  
 Surrounded by the gnashing demon hordes,  
 I did the Hathayoga in three days,  
 Which men with anguish through ten lives effect,  
 Not that now practised by earth's feeble race,  
 But that which Rávan knew in Lanka, Dhruv  
 Fulfilled, Hiranyakashipu performed,  
 The Yoga of the old Lemurian Kings.  
 I felt the strength of Titans in my veins,  
 The joy of Gods, the pride of Siddhas. Tall  
 And mighty like a striding God I came  
 To Vyása; but he shook his dense piled locks,  
 Denying me; “Thou art not pure” he cried.  
 I went in anger to Himaloy's peaks  
 And on the highest in the breathless snow  
 Sat dumb for many years. Then knowledge came  
 Streaming upon me and the hills around  
 Shook with the feet of the descending power.  
 I did the Rájayoga in three days,  
 Which men with care and accuracy minute  
 Ceaselessly follow for an age in vain—  
 Not Kali's Rájayoga, but the means  
 Of perfect knowledge, purity and force  
 Bali the Titan learned and gave to men,  
 The Yoga of the old Atlantic Kings.  
 I came to Vyása, shining like a sun.  
 He smiled and said, “Now seek the world's Great Soul,  
 Sri Krishna, where he lives on earth concealed,

Give up to him all that thou know'st and hast;  
 For thou art he, elect from mortal men  
 To guard the knowledge, yet an easy task  
 While the third age preserves man's godlike form.  
 But when thou seest the iron Kali come  
 And he from Dwarka leaves the Earth, know then  
 The time of trial, help endangered men,  
 Preserve the knowledge that preserves the world,  
 Until Sri Krishna utterly returns.  
 Then art thou from thy mighty work released  
 Into the worlds of bliss for endless years  
 To rest, until another æon comes,  
 When of the seven Rishis thou art one."  
 I sent my knowledge forth across the land.  
 It found him not in Bharat's princely halls,  
 In quiet asrams, nor in temples pure,  
 Nor where the wealthy traffickers resort—  
 Brahmin nor Kshatriya body housed the Lord,  
 Vaisya nor Sudra nor outcaste. At length  
 To a bare hut on a wild mountain's verge  
 Led by the star I came. A hermit mad  
 Of the wild Abhirs, who sat dumb or laughed  
 And ran and leaped and danced upon the hills  
 But told the reason of his joy to none,  
 In him I saw the Lord, behind the man  
 Perceived the spirit that contains the world.  
 I fell before him, but he leapt and ran  
 And smote me with his foot and out of me  
 All knowledge, all desire, all strength was gone  
 Into its source. I sat an infant child.  
 He laughed aloud and said, "Take back thy gifts,  
 O beggar!" and went leaping down the slope.  
 Then full of light and strength and bliss I soared  
 Beyond the spheres, above the mighty Gods  
 And left my human body on the snows.

And others gathered to me, more or less  
In puissance to assist, but mine the charge  
By Vishnu given. I gather knowledge here,  
Then to my human frame awhile descend  
And walk mid men, choosing my instruments,  
Testing, rejecting and confirming souls—  
Vessels of the Spirit; for the golden age  
In Kali comes, the iron lined with gold,  
The Yoga shall be given back to men,  
The sects shall cease, the grim debates die out  
And atheism perish from the Earth,  
Blasted with knowledge, love and brotherhood  
And wisdom repossess Sri Krishna's world.

## Ahana

[Ahana, the Dawn of God, descends on the world where amid the strife and trouble of mortality the Hunters of Joy, the Seekers after Knowledge, the Climbers in the quest of Power are toiling up the slopes or waiting in the valleys. As she stands on the mountains of the East, voices of the Hunters of Joy are the first to greet her.]

Vision delightful alone on the hills whom the silences cover,  
Closer yet lean to mortality; human, stoop to thy lover.  
Wonderful, gold like a moon in the square of the sun where thou  
strayest  
Glimmers thy face amid crystal purities; mighty thou playest  
Sole on the peaks of the world, unafraid of thy loneliness. Glances  
Leap from thee down to us, dream-seas and light-falls and magical  
trances;  
Sun-drops flake from thy eyes and the heart's caverns packed are  
with pleasure  
Strange like a song without words or the dance of a measureless  
measure.  
Tread through the edges of dawn, over twilight's grey-lidded  
margin;  
Heal earth's unease with thy feet, O heaven-born delicate virgin.  
Children of Time whose spirits came down from eternity, seizing  
Joys that escape us, yoked by our hearts to a labour unceasing,  
Earth-bound, torn with our longings, our life is a brief incom-  
pleteness.  
Thou hast the stars to sport with, the winds run like bees to thy  
sweetness.  
Art thou not heaven-bound even as I with the earth? Hast thou  
ended  
All desirable things in a stillness lone and unfriended?

Only is calm so sweet? is our close tranquillity only?  
 Cold are the rivers of peace and their banks are leafless and lonely.  
 Heavy is godhead to bear with its mighty sun-burden of lustre.  
 Art thou not weary of only the stars in their solemn muster,  
 Sky-hung the chill bare plateaus and peaks where the eagle  
 rejoices

In the inhuman height of his nesting, solitude's voices  
 Making the heart of the silence lonelier? strong and untiring,  
 Deaf with the cry of the waterfall, lonely the pine lives aspiring.  
 Two are the ends of existence, two are the dreams of the Mother:  
 Heaven unchanging, earth with her time-beats yearn to each  
 other,—

Earth-souls needing the touch of the heavens peace to recapture,  
 Heaven needing earth's passion to quiver its peace into rapture.  
 Marry, O lightning eternal, the passion of a moment-born fire!  
 Out of thy greatness draw close to the breast of our mortal desire!  
 Is he thy master, Rudra the mighty, Shiva ascetic?  
 Has he denied thee his world? In his dance that they tell of,  
 ecstatic,

Slaying, creating, calm in the midst of the movement and madness,  
 Stole there no rhythm of an earthly joy and a mortal sadness?  
 Wast thou not made in the shape of a woman? Sweetness and  
 beauty

Move like a song of the gods in thy limbs and to love is thy duty  
 Graved in thy heart as on tablets of fate; joy's delicate blossom  
 Sleeps in thy lids of delight; all Nature hides in thy bosom  
 Claiming her children unborn and the food of her love and her  
 laughter.

Is he the first? was there none then before him? shall none come  
 after?

He who denies and his blows beat down on our hearts like a  
 hammer's,

He whose calm is the silent reply to our passion and clamours!



Tangles of sunbeams asleep, mooned dream-depths, twilight's  
shadows,  
Taste and scent and the fruits of her trees and the flowers of her  
meadows,  
Life with her wine-cup of longing under the purple of her tenture,  
Death as her gate of escape and rebirth and renewal of venture  
Still must they mutter that all here is vision and passing appear-  
ance,  
Magic of Maya with falsehood and pain for its only inherence.  
One is there only, apart in his greatness, the End and  
Beginning,—  
He who has sent through his soul's wide spaces the universe  
spinning.  
One eternal, Time an illusion, life a brief error!  
One eternal, Master of heaven—and of hell and its terror!  
Spirit of silence and purity rapt and aloof from creation,—  
Dreaming through æons unreal his splendid and empty forma-  
tion!  
Spirit all-wise in omnipotence shaping a world but to break it,—  
Pushed by what mood of a moment, the breath of what fancy to  
make it?  
None is there great but the eternal and lonely, the unique and  
unmated,  
Bliss lives alone with the self-pure, the single, the forever-un-  
created.  
Truths? or thought's structures bridging the vacancy mute and  
unsounded  
Facing the soul when it turns from the stress of the figures  
around it?  
Solely we see here a world self-made by some indwelling Glory  
Building with forms and events its strange and magnificent story.  
Yet at the last has not all been solved and unwisdom demolished,  
Myth cast out and all dreams of the soul and all worship  
abolished?

All now is changed, the reverse of the coin has been shown to us;  
Reason

Waking, detecting the hoax of the spirit, at last has arisen,  
Captured the Truth and built round her its bars that she may not  
skedaddle,

Gallop again with the bit in her teeth and with Fancy in the saddle.  
Now have the wise men discovered that all is the craft of a super-  
Magic of Chance and a movement of Void and inconscient Stupor.  
Chance by a wonderful accident ever her ripples expanding  
Out of a gaseous circle of Nothingness, implacably extending  
Freak upon freak, repeating rigidly marvels on marvels,  
Making a world out of Nothing, started on the arc of her travels.  
Nothingness born into feeling and action dies back to Nothing.  
Sea of a vague electricity, romping through space-curves and  
clothing

Strangely the Void with a semblance of Matter, painfully flowered  
Into this giant phenomenon universe. Man who has towered  
Out of the plasm and struggled by thought to Divinity's level,  
Man, this miniature second creator of good and of evil,  
He too was only a compost of Matter made living, organic,  
Forged as her thinking tool by an Energy blind and mechanic.  
Once by an accident queer but quite natural, provable, simple,  
Out of blind Space-Nought lashed into life, wearing Mind as its  
wimple,

Dupe of a figment of consciousness, doped with behaviour and  
feature,

Matter deluded claimed to be spirit and sentient creature.

All the high dreams man has dreamed and his hopes and his deeds,  
his soul's greatness

Are but a food-seeking animal's acts with the mind for their  
witness,—

Mind a machine for the flickers of thought, Matter's logic  
unpremissed,—

Are but a singular fireworks, chemistry lacking the chemist,



Matter's nervous display; the heart's passion, the sorrow and  
burning  
Fire of delight and sweet ecstasy, love and its fathomless yearning,  
Boundless spiritual impulses making us one with world-being,  
Outbursts of vision opening doors to a limitless seeing,  
Gases and glands and the genes and the nerves and the brain-cells  
have done it,  
Brooded out drama and epic, structured the climb of the sonnet,  
Studied the stars and discovered the brain and the laws of its  
thinking,  
Sculptured the cave-temple, reared the cathedral, infinity drinking  
Wrought manufacturing God and the soul for the uplift of  
Nature,—  
Science, philosophy, head of his mystical chemical stature,  
Music and painting revealing the godhead in sound and in colour,  
Acts of the hero, thoughts of the thinker, search of the scholar,  
All the magnificent planning, all the inquiry and wonder  
Only a trick of the atom, its marvellous magical blunder.  
Who can believe it? Something or someone, a Force or a Spirit  
Conscious, creative, wonderful shaped out a world to inherit  
Here for the beings born from its vast universal existence,—  
Fields of surprise and adventure, vistas of light-haunted distance,  
Play-routes of wisdom and vision and struggle and rapture and  
sorrow,  
Sailing in Time through the straits of today to the sea of  
tomorrow.  
Worlds and their wonders, suns and their flamings, earth and her  
nations,  
Voyages endless of Mind through the surge of its fate-tossed  
creations,  
Star upon star throbbing out in the silence of infinite spaces,  
Species on species, bodies on bodies, faces on faces,

Souls without number crossing through Time towards eternity,  
æons

Crowding on æons, loving and battle, dirges and pæans,  
Thoughts ever leaping, hopes ever yearning, lives ever streaming  
Millions and millions on trek through the days with their doings  
and dreaming,

Herds of the Sun who move on at the cry of the radiant drover,—  
Countless, surviving the death of the centuries, lost to recover,  
Finished, but only to begin again, who is its tireless creator,  
Cause or the force of its driving, its thinker or formless dictator?  
Surely no senseless Vacancy made it, surely 'twas fashioned  
By an almighty One million-ecstasied, thousand-passioned.  
Self-made? then by what self from which thought could arise and  
emotion,

Waves that well up to the surface, born from what mystieried  
ocean?

Nature alone is the fountain. But what is she? Is she not only  
Figure and name for what none understands, though all feel, or  
a lonely

Word in which all finds expression, spirit-heights, dumb work of  
Matter,—

Vague designation filling the gaps of our thought with its clatter?  
Power without vision that blunders in man into thinking and  
sinning?

Rigid vast inexhaustible mystery void of a meaning?  
Energy blindly devising, unconsciously ranging in order?  
Chance in the march of a cosmic Insanity crossing the border  
Out of the eternal silence to thought and its strangeness and  
splendour?

Consciousness born by an accident until an accident end her?  
Nought else is she but the power of the Spirit who dwells in her  
ever,

Witness and cause of her workings, lord of her pauseless  
endeavour.

All things she knows, though she seems here unseeing; even in  
her slumber  
Wondrous her works are, design and its magic and magic of  
number,  
Plan of her mighty cosmic geometry, balance of forces,  
Universe flung beyond universe, law of the stars and their  
courses,  
Cosmos atomic stretched to the scale of the Infinite's measure.  
Mute in the trance of the Eternal she sleeps with the stone and  
the azure.  
Now she awakes; for life has just stirred in her, stretching first  
blindly  
Outward for sense and its pleasure and pain and the gifts of the  
kindly  
Mother of all, for her light and her air and the sap from her  
flowing,  
Pleasure of bloom and unconscious beauty, pleasure of growing.  
Then into mind she arises; heart's yearning awakes and  
reflection  
Looks out on struggle and harmony,—conscious, her will of  
selection  
Studies her works and illumines the choice of her way; last, slowly  
Inward she turns and stares at the Spirit within her. Holy  
Silences brood in her heart and she feels in her ardent recesses  
Passions too great for her frame, on her body immortal caresses.  
Into the calm of the Greatness beyond her she enters, burning  
Now with a light beyond thought's, towards Self and Infinity  
turning,  
Turned to beatitude, turned to eternity, spiritual grandeur,  
Power without limit, ecstasy imperishable, shadowless splendour.  
Then to her mortals come, flashing, thoughts that are wisdom's  
fire-kernel;  
Leaping her flame-sweeps of might and delight and of vision  
supernal

Kindle the word and the act, the Divine and humanity fusing,  
 Illuminations, trance-seeds of silence, flowers of musing,—  
 Light of our being that yet has to be, its glory and glimmer  
 Smiting with sunrise the soul of the sage and the heart of the  
 dreamer.

Or is it all but a vain expectation and effort ungrounded,  
 Wings without body, sight without object, waters unsounded,  
 Hue of a shimmer that steals through some secret celestial portal,  
 Glory of a gleam or a dream in an animal brief-lived and mortal?  
 Are they not radiances native to heaven's more fortunate ether,  
 Won when we part from this body, this temporal house of a nether  
 Mystery of life lived in vain? Upon earth is the glory forbidden,  
 Nature for ever accursed, frustrated, grief-vexed, fate-ridden?  
 Half of the glory she dreamed of forgotten or lost in earth's  
 darkness,  
 Half of it mangled and missed as the death-wheels whirl in their  
 starkness,  
 Cast out from heaven a goddess rebellious with mind for her  
 mirror,  
 Cursed with desire and self-will and doomed to self-torture and  
 error,  
 Came she to birth then with God for her enemy? Were we created  
 He unwilling or sleeping? did someone transgress the fated  
 Limits he set, outwitting God? In the too hasty vision  
 Marred of some demiurge filmed there the blur of a fatal mis-  
 prison,  
 Making a world that revolves on itself in a circuit of failure,  
 Aeons of striving, death for a recompense, Time for our tenure?  
 Out of him rather she came and for him are her cry and her  
 labour;  
 Deep are her roots in him; topless she climbs, to his greatness a  
 neighbour.

All is himself in her, brooding in darkness, mounting the  
sun-ways:

Air-flight to him is man's journey with heaven and earth for the  
runways.

He is the witness and doer, he is the loved and the lover,

He the eternal Truth that we look in ourselves to discover.

All is his travel in Time; it is he who turns history's pages,

Act and event and result are the trail that he leaves through the  
ages;

Form and idea are his signs and number and sound are his  
symbols,

Music and singing, the word and its rhythm are Divinity's  
cymbals,

Thunder and surge are the drums of his marching. Through us,  
with urges

Self-ward, form-bound, mute, motionless, slowly inevitably  
emerges

Vast as the cosmos, minute as the atom, the Spirit eternal.

Often the gusts of his force illumining moments diurnal

Flame into speech and idea; transcendences splendid and subtle

Suddenly shoot through the weft of our looms from a magical  
shuttle;

Hid in our hearts is his glory; the Spirit works in our members.

Silence is he, with our voices he speaks, in our thoughts he  
remembers.

Deep in our being inhabits the voiceless invisible Teacher;

Powers of his godhead we live; the Creator dwells in the creature.

Out of his Void we arise to a mighty and shining existence,

Out of Inconscience, tearing the black Mask's giant resistance;

Waves of his consciousness well from him into these bodies in  
Nature,

Forms are put round him; his oneness, divided by mind's  
nomenclature,



None can exceed himself; even to find oneself hard for our search  
is:

Only we see as in night by a lustre of flickering torches.  
To be content with our measure, our space is the law of our living.  
All of thyself to thy manhood and Nature and Circumstance  
giving,  
Be what thou must be or be what thou canst be, one hour in an era.  
Knowing the truth of thy days, shun the light of ideal and  
chimera:  
Curb heart's impatience, bind thy desires down, pause from self-  
vexing."

Who is the nomad then? who is the seeker, the gambler risking  
All for a dream in a dream, the old and the sure and the stable  
Flung as a stake for a prize that was never yet laid on the table?  
Always the world is expanding and growing from minute to  
minute;  
Playing the march of the adventure of Time with our lives for  
her spinet

Maya or Nature, the wonderful Mother, strikes out surprising  
Strains of the Spirit disprisoned; creation heavenward rising  
Wrestles with Time and Space and the Unknown to give form to  
the Formless.

Bliss is her goal, but her road is through whirlwind and death-  
blast and storm-race.

All is a wager and danger, all is a chase and a battle.

Vainly man, crouched in his corner of safety, shrinks from the  
fatal

Lure of the Infinite. Guided by Powers that surround and  
precede us

Fearful and faltering steps are our perishing efforts that lead us  
On through the rooms of the finite till open the limitless spaces  
And we can look into all-seeing eyes and imperishable faces.

But we must pass through the æons; Space is a bar twist our ankles,  
Time is a weight that we drag and the scar of the centuries rankles:  
Caught by the moments, held back from the spirit's timelessness, slowly  
Wading in shallows we take not the sea-plunge vastly and wholly.  
Hard is the way to the Eternal for the mind-born will of the mortal  
Bound by the body and life to the gait of the house-burdened turtle.  
Here in this world that knows not its morrow, this reason that stumbles  
Onward from error to truth and from truth back to error while crumbles  
All that it fashioned, after the passion and travail are ended,  
After the sacrifice offered when the will and the strength are expended,  
Nothing is done but to have laid down one stone of a road without issue,  
Added our quota of evil and good to an ambiguous tissue.  
Destiny's lasso, its slip-knot tied by delight and repining,  
Draws us through tangles of failure and victory's inextricable twining.  
In the hard reckoning made by the grey-robed accountant at even  
Pain is the ransom we pay for the smallest foretaste of heaven.  
Ignorance darkens, death and inconscience gape to absorb us;  
Thick and persistent the Night confronts us, its hunger enormous  
Swallowing our work and our lives. Our love and our knowledge squandered  
Lie like a treasure refused and trod down on the ways where we wandered;  
All we have done is effaced by the thousands behind us arriving.  
Trapped in a round fixed for ever circles our thought and our living.



Fiercely the gods in their jealousy strike down the heads that have  
neighbour'd  
Even for a moment their skies; in the sands our achievements are  
gravured.  
Yet survives bliss in the rhythm of our heart-beats, yet is there  
wonder  
Beauty's immortal delight, and the seals of the mystery sunder.  
Honied a thousand whispers come, in the birds, in the breezes,  
Moonlight, the voices of streams; with a hundred marvellous faces  
Always he lures us to love him, always he draws us to pleasure  
Leaving remembrance and anguish behind for our only treasure.  
Passionate we seek for him everywhere, yearn for some sign of  
him, calling,  
Scanning the dust for his foot-prints, praying and stumbling and  
falling;  
Nothing is found and no answer comes from the masks that are  
passing.  
Memories linger, lines from the past like a half-faded tracing.  
He has passed on into silence wearing his luminous mantle.  
Out of the melodied distance a laugh rings pure-toned, infantile,  
Sole reminder that he is, last signal recalling his presence.  
There is a joy behind suffering; pain digs our road to his pleasance.  
All things have bliss for their secret; only our consciousness  
falters  
Fearing to offer itself as a victim on ecstasy's altars.  
Is not the world his disguise? when that cloak is tossed back from  
his shoulders,  
Beauty looks out like a sun on the hearts of the ravished beholders.  
Mortals, your end is beatitude, rapture eternal his meaning:  
Joy, which he most now denies, is his purpose: the hedges, the  
screening  
Were but the rules of his play; his denials came to lure farther.  
These too were magic of Maya, smiles of the marvellous Mother.

Oh, but the cruelty! oh, but the empty pain we go rueing!  
Edges of opposite sweetness, calls to a closer pursuing.  
All that we meet is a symbol and gateway; cryptic intention  
Lurks in a common appearance, smiles from a casual mention:  
Opposites hide in each other; in the laughter of Nature is danger,  
Glory and greatness their embryos form in the womb of her anger.  
Why are we terrified? wherefore cry out and draw back from the  
smiting—

Blows from the hands of a lover to direr exactions exciting,  
Fiery points of his play! Was he Rudra only the mighty?  
Whose were the whispers of sweetness, whose were the murmurs  
of pity?  
Something opposes our grasp on the light and the sweetness and  
power,  
Something within us, something without us, trap-door or tower,  
Nature's gap in our being—or hinge. That device could we  
vanquish,  
Once could we clasp him and hold, his joy we could never relinquish.  
Then we could not be denied, for our might would be single and  
flawless.

Sons of the Eternal, sovereigns of Nature absolute and lawless,  
Termlessly our souls would possess as he now enjoys and  
possesses,  
Termlessly probe the delight of his laughter's lurking recesses,  
Chasing its trail to the apex of sweetness and secrecy. Treasured  
Close to the beats of Eternity's heart in a greatness unmeasured,  
Locked into a miracle and mystery of Light we would live in him,  
—seated  
Deep in his core of beatitude ceaselessly by Nature repeated,  
Careless of Time, with no fear of an end, with no need for  
endeavour  
Caught by his ecstasy dwell in a rapture enduring for ever.

What was the garden he built when the stars were first set in their  
places,  
Soul and Nature together mid streams and in cloudless spaces  
Naked and innocent? Someone offered a fruit of derision,  
Knowledge of good and of evil, cleaving in God a division.  
Though he who made all said, "It is good, I have fashioned  
perfection,"  
"No, there is evil," someone whispered, "'tis screened from  
detection."  
Wisest he of the beasts of the field, one cunning and creeping;  
"See it," he said, "be wise; you shall be as the gods are, un-  
sleeping,  
They who know all." And they ate. The roots of our being were  
shaken;  
Hatred and weeping and wrath at once trampled a world over-  
taken,  
Terror and fleeing and anguish and shame and desires unsated;  
Cruelty stalked like a lion; Revenge and her brood were created.  
Out to the desert he drove the rebellious. Flaming behind them  
Streamed out the sword of his wrath and it followed leaping to  
find them,  
Stabbing at random. The pure and the evil, the strong and the  
tempted,  
All are confounded in punishment; justly is no one exempted.  
Virtuous? yes, there are many, but who is there innocent? Toiling  
Therefore we seek, but find not that Eden. Planting and spoiling,  
"This is the garden," we say, "lo, the trees and this is the river."  
Vainly redeemers came, not one has availed to deliver.  
Never can Nature go back to her careless and childlike beginning,  
Laugh of the babe and the song of the wheel in its delicate  
spinning,  
Smile of the sun upon flowers and earth's beauty, life without  
labour  
Plucking the fruits of the soil and rejoicing in cottage and arbour.

Once we have chosen to be as the gods, we must follow that motion.  
 Knowledge must grow in us, might like a Titan's, bliss like an  
 ocean,

Calmness and purity born of the spirit's gaze on the Real,  
 Rapture of his oneness embracing the soul in a clasp hymeneal.

Was it not he once in Brindavan? Woods divine to our yearning,  
 Memorable always! O flowers, O delight on the tree-tops burning,  
 Grasses his herds have grazed and crushed by his feet in the  
 dancing,

Yamuna flowing with song, through the greenness always  
 advancing,

You unforgotten remind; for his flute with its sweetness  
 ensnaring

Sounds in our ears in the night and our souls of their teguments  
 baring

Hales us out naked and absolute, out to his woodlands eternal,  
 Out to his moonlit dances, his dalliance sweet and supernal,  
 And we go stumbling, maddened and thrilled to his dreadful  
 embraces,

Slaves of his rapture to Brindavan crowded with amorous faces,  
 Luminous kine in the green glades seated, soft-eyed gazing,  
 Flowers on the branches distressing us, moonbeams unearthly  
 amazing,

Yamuna flowing before us, laughing low with her voices,  
 Brindavan arching o'er us where Shyama sports and rejoices.  
 Inly the miracle trembles repeated; mist-walls are broken  
 Hiding that country of God and we look on the wonderful token,  
 Clasp the beautiful body of the Eternal; his flute-call of yearning  
 Cries in our breast with its blissful anguish for ever returning;  
 Life flows past us with passionate voices, a heavenly river,  
 All our being goes back as a bride of his bliss to the Giver.  
 Even an hour of the soul can unveil the Unborn, the Everlasting,  
 Gaze on its mighty Companion; the load of mortality casting,

Mind hushes stilled in eternity; waves of the Infinite wander  
Thrilling body and soul and its endless felicity squander;  
All world-sorrow is finished, the cry of the parting is over;  
Ecstasy laughs in our veins, in our heart is the heart of the Lover.  
As when a stream from a highland plateau green mid the mountains  
Draws through broad lakes of delight the gracious sweep of its fountains,  
Life from its heaven of desire comes down to the toil of the earth-ways;  
Streaming through mire it pours still the mystical joy of its birthplace,  
Green of its banks and the green of its trees and the hues of the flower.  
Something of child-heart beauty, something of greatness and power,  
Dwell with it still in its early torrent laughter and brightness,  
Call in the youth of its floods and the voice of the wideness and whiteness.  
But in its course are set darkness and fall and the spirit's ordeal.  
Hating its narrowness, forced by an ardour to see all and be all,  
Dashed on the insouciant rocks and straining through mud, over gravel,  
Flows, like an ardent prisoner bound to the scenes of his travail,  
Life, the river of the Spirit, consenting to anguish and sorrow  
If by her heart's toil a loan-light of joy from the heavens she can borrow.  
Out of the sun-rays and moon-rays, the winds' wing-glimmer and revel,  
Out of the star-fields of wonder, down to earth's danger and evil  
Headlong cast with a strident thunder, the doom-ways descending,  
Shuddering below into sunless depths, across chasms unending,



Bright amid woodlands red with the berries and cool with the breezes  
Glimmer the leaves; all night long the heart of the nightingale eases  
Sweetly its burden of pity and sorrow. There amid flowers  
We shall take pleasure in arbours delightful, lengthening the hours,  
Time for our servitor waiting our fancy through moments unhasting,  
Under the cloudless blue of those skies of tranquillity resting,  
Lying on beds of lilies, hearing the bells of the cattle  
Tinkle, and drink red wine of life and go forth to the battle,  
Fight and unwounded return to our beautiful home by the waters,  
Fruit of our joy rear tall strong sons and radiant daughters.  
Then shall the Virgins of Light come down to us clad in clear raiment  
Woven from sunbeam and moonbeam and lightnings, limitless payment  
Bring of our toil and our sorrow, carrying life-giving garlands  
Plucked by the fountains of Paradise, bring from imperishable star-lands  
Hymn-words of wisdom, visions of beauty, heaven-fruit ruddy,  
Wine-cups of ecstasy sending the soul like a stream through the body.  
Fate shall not know; if her spies come down to our beautiful valley,  
They shall grow drunk with its grapes and wander in woodland and alley.  
There leaps the anger of Rudra? there will his lightnings immortal  
Circle around with their red eye of cruelty stabbing the portal?  
Fearless is there life's play; I shall sport with my dove from his highlands,  
Drinking her laughter of bliss like a god in my Grecian islands.

Life in my limbs shall grow deathless, flesh with the God-glory  
tingle,

Lustre of Paradise, light of the earth-ways marry and mingle.

These are but dreams and the truth shall be greater. Heaven  
made woman!

Flower of beatitude! living shape of the bliss of the Brahman!

Art thou not she who shall bring into life and time the Eternal?

Body of the summer of the Gods, a sweetness virginal, vernal,  
Breathes from thy soul into Nature; Love sits dreaming in thy  
bosom,

Wisdom gazes from thy eyes, thy breasts of God-rapture are the  
blossom.

If but the joy of thy feet once could touch our spaces smiting

Earth with a ray from the Unknown, on the world's heart  
heaven's script writing,

All then would change into harmony and beauty, Time's doors  
shudder

Swinging wide on their hinges into Eternity other

Voices than earth's would be fire in our speech and make deathless  
our thinking.

One who is hidden in Light would grow visible, multitudes  
linking,

Lyres of a single ecstasy, throbs of the one heart beating,

Wonderful bodies and souls in the spirit's identity meeting

Even as stars in sky-vastness know their kindred in grandeur.

Yet may it be that although in the hands of our destiny stands sure

Fixed to its hour the Decree of the Advent, still it is fated

Only when kindling earth's bodies a mightier Soul is created.

Far-off the gold and the greatness, the rapture too splendid and  
dire.

Are not the ages too young? too low in our hearts burns the fire.

Bringest thou only a gleam on the summits, a cry in the distance,

Seen by the eyes that are wakened, heard by a spirit that listens?



Form of the formless All-Beautiful, lodestar of Nature's  
 aspirance,  
 Music of prelude giving a voice to the ineffable Silence,  
 First white dawn of the God-Light cast on these creatures that  
 perish,  
 Word-key of a divine and eternal truth for mortals to cherish,  
 Come! let thy sweetness and force be a breath in the breast of  
 the future  
 Making the god-ways alive, immortality's golden-red suture:  
 Deep in our lives there shall work out a honeyed celestial heaven,  
 Bliss shall grow native to being and earth be a kin-soil to heaven.  
 Open the barriers of Time, the world with thy beauty enamour,  
 Trailing behind thee the purple of thy soul and the dawn-moment's  
 glamour,  
 Forcing the heart of the Midnight where slumber and secrecy  
 linger,  
 Guardians of mystery, touching her bosom with thy luminous  
 finger,  
 Daughter of Heaven, break through to me moonlike, mystic and  
 gleaming;  
 Tread through the margins of twilight, cross over borders of  
 dreaming.  
 Vision delightful alone on the peaks whom the silences cover,  
 Vision of bliss, stoop down to mortality, lean to thy lover.

## AHANA

Voice of the sensuous mortal, heart of eternal longing,  
 Thou who hast lived as in walls, thy soul with thy senses  
 wronging!  
 But I descend at last. Fickle and terrible, sweet and deceiving,  
 Poison and nectar one has dispensed to thee, luring thee, leaving.





# THE CENTURY OF LIFE

*I had at first entitled the translation "The Century of Morals," but the Sanskrit word Niti has a more complex sense. It includes also policy and worldly wisdom, the rule of successful as well as the law of ideal conduct and gives scope for observation of all the turns and forces determining the movement of human character and action.*

*The Shataka or 'Century' should normally comprise a hundred epigrams, but the number that has come down to us is considerably more. The excess is probably due to accretion and the mistaken ascription to Bhartrihari of verses not of his making but cast in his spirit and manner.*

—SRI AUROBINDO.



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# THE CENTURY OF LIFE

## INVOCATION

To the calm Light inviolable all hail  
Whom Time divides not, nor Space measures, One,  
Boundless and Absolute who is alone,  
The eternal vast I am immutable!

## On Fools and Folly

### LOVE'S FOLLY

She with whom all my thoughts dwell, is averse,-  
She loves another. He whom she desires  
Turns to a fairer face. Another worse  
For me afflicted is with deeper fires.  
Fie on my love and me and him and her!  
Fie most on Love, this madness' minister!

### THE MIDDLE SORT

Easily shalt thou the ignorant appease;  
The wise more easily is satisfied;  
But one who builds his raw and foolish pride  
On a little lore not God himself can please.

### OBSTINACY IN FOLLY

Go, with strong violence thy jewel tear  
From the fierce alligator's yawning jaws;  
Swim the wild surges when they lash the air  
Billow on billow thundering without pause;  
Or set an angry serpent in thy hair  
For garland! Sooner shalt thou gain their ruth  
Than conquer the fool's obstinate heart with truth.

## ON THE SAME

Nay, thou wilt find sweet oil in the sea-sands,  
 Press them but firmly in thy strenuous hands:  
 The desert-born mirage shall slake thy thirst,  
 Or wandering through the earth thou shalt be first  
 To find the horns of hares, who think'st to school  
 With reason the prejudgments of the fool.

## OBSTINACY IN VICE

Yea, wouldst thou task thy muscles then the dread  
 Strength of the mammoth to constrain with thread,  
 Canst thou the diamond's adamant heart disclose  
 With the sweet edge and sharpness of a rose,  
 With a poor drop of honey wondrously  
 Wilt thou make sweetness of the wide salt sea,  
 Who dream'st with sugared perfect words to gain  
 The dishonest to the ways of noble men.

## FOLLY'S WISDOM

One cloak on ignorance absolutely fits;  
     Justly if worn, some grace is even lent;  
 Silence in sessions of the learned sits  
     On the fool's brow like a bright ornament.

### A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE

When I was with a little knowledge cursed,  
Like a mad elephant I stormed about  
And thought myself all-knowing. But when deep-versed  
Rich minds some portion of their wealth disbursed  
My poverty to raise, then for a lout  
And dunce I knew myself, and the insolence went  
Out from me like a fever violent.

### PRIDE OF LITTLENESS

The dog upon a meatless bone and lank  
Horrible, stinking, vile, with spittle wet,  
Feasts and with heaven's nectar gives it rank.  
Then though the ambrosial God should by him stand,  
He is not awed nor feels how base his fate,  
But keeps his ghastly gettings more in hand.  
The little nature deems its small things great  
And virtue scorns and strength and noble state.

### FACILIS DESCENSUS

In highest heavens the Ganges' course began;  
From Shiva's loftiest brow to the white snows  
She tumbles, nor on the cold summits can,  
But headlong seeks the valley and the rose.  
Thence downward still the heaven-born waters ran.  
Say not, "Is this that Ganges? can her place  
Be now so low?" Rather when man at all  
From heavenly reason swerves, he sinks from grace  
Swiftly. A thousand voices downward call,  
A thousand doors are opened to his fall.

## THE GREAT INCURABLE

For all ill things there is a cure; the fire's  
     Red spleen cool water shall at once appease,  
 And noontide's urgent rays the sunshade tires,  
     And there are spells for poison, and disease  
 Finds in the leech's careful drugs its ease.  
 The raging elephant yet feels the goad,  
     And the dull ass and obstinate bullock rule  
 Cudgel and stick and force upon their road.  
     For one sole plague no cure is found—the fool.

## BODIES WITHOUT MIND

Some minds there are to Art and Beauty dead,  
     Music and poetry on whose dull ear  
 Fall barren. Horns grace not their brutish head,  
     Tails too they lack, yet is their beasthood clear.  
 That Heaven ordained not upon grass their feasts,  
 Good fortune is this for the other beasts.

## THE HUMAN HERD

Whose days to neither charity nor thought  
     Are given, nor holy deeds nor virtues prized,  
 Nor learning, such to cumber earth were brought.  
     How in the human world as men disguised  
 This herd walk grazing, higher things unsought!

A CHOICE

Better were this, to roam in deserts wild,  
    On difficult mountains and by desolate pools,  
A savage life with wild beasts reconciled,  
    Than Paradise itself mated with fools.

## On Wisdom

### POETS AND PRINCES

Unhonoured in a State when poets dwell  
Whose fames range wider than its strong-winged birds,  
Whose utterance is for grace adorable  
Of chosen speech and art of noble words,  
Whose wisdom hundreds come to hear and tell;  
The world that nation's chief for dullness blames,  
For poets without wealth are rich and kings:  
When values low depreciate costly things,  
'Tis the appraiser's shame and not the gem's.

### TRUE WEALTH

Knowledge is truest wealth, not this which dies,—  
It cherishes a strange deep peace within  
Unutterably, nor the robber's eyes  
Ever shall find it out; to give it is gain,  
It then grows most when parted with, and poured  
With sleepless hand fills gloriously its lord.  
Worlds perish may, Knowledge survives their fall;  
This wise men cherish; O Kings, your pride recall,  
You have but wealth, they inner royalty  
Of lordliest wisdom. Who with these shall vie?



## THE MAN OF KNOWLEDGE

Scorn not the man of knowledge to whose eyes  
The secrets of the world have been revealed!  
Thou canst not hold his spirit from the skies  
By fortune light nor all that earth can yield.  
The furious tusker with new dark rut stained  
Were sooner by a lotus-thread detained.

## FATE AND WISDOM

What can the extreme wrath of hostile Fate?  
The swan that floats in the cool lotus-wood  
She from his pleasant mansion can exclude.  
His fame remains, in food adulterate \*  
Who could the better choose, the worse discern.  
Fate cannot touch glory that mind can earn.

## THE REAL ORNAMENT

It is not armlets that adorn a man,  
Nor necklaces all crammed with moonbright pearls,  
Nor baths, nor ointments, nor arrangèd curls.  
'Tis art of excellent speech that only can  
Adorn him: jewels perish, garlands fade;  
This only abides and glitters undecayed.

\*The swan was supposed to have the power of separating milk from water, when the two were mixed.

## THE PRAISES OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is nobler beauty in a man  
 Than features: 'tis his hidden hoard of price;  
 This the long roll of Masters first began;  
 Pleasure it brings, just fame and constant bliss,  
 And is a helping friend in foreign lands,  
 And is a very god with puissant hands:  
 Knowledge, not wealth in great men is adored,  
 Nor better than a beast the mind unstored.

## COMPARISONS

Men cherish burning anger in their hearts,  
 Yet look without to find if they have foes.  
 Who sweet forbearance has, requires no arts  
 Of speech; persuading silently he goes.

Why fear the snake when in thy kindness bask  
 Men evil, or a fire while kinsmen jar  
 Burning thy house! From heaven no medicines ask  
 To heal a troubled mind, where true friends are.

Nor seek for ornaments, noble modest shame  
 Being with thee, nor for wealth when wisdom's by.  
 Who needs a kingdom when his mind can claim  
 A golden realm in sweetest poetry?

### WORLDLY WISDOM

Have mercy for all men, for thy own race  
Have kindness, for the cunning cunning have,  
Affection for the good, and politic ways  
For princes: for thy foes a spirit brave,  
Patience for elders, candour for the wise:  
Have skilful ways to steal out women's hearts.  
Who shine here, masters in these social arts,  
In them the human scheme deep-rooted lies.

### GOOD COMPANY

Company of good men is a very soil  
Of plenty, yielding all high things to man.  
The dull weight of stupidity it can  
Lift from the mind and cleanse of falsehood vile,  
Sprinkling truth's fragrance sweet upon the speech;  
And it can point out greatness' rising path,  
And drive out sinful lust and drive out wrath,  
And a calm gladness to the senses teach;  
Glory that to the very stars would climb,  
Can give thee, conquering thy heart and time.

### THE CONQUESTS OF SOVEREIGN POETRY

Who are the conquerors? Not mere lords of land,  
But kingly poets, whose high victories  
Are perfect works; men's hearts at their command  
Are wholly; at their will the passions rise.  
Glory their body is, which Death's pale fear  
Afflicts not, nor abhorrèd Age comes near.

## RARITIES

Whatever most the soul on earth desires,  
     Are rarities, as, a virtuous son; a wife  
 Who wholly loves; Fortune that never tires;  
     A friend whose sweet affection waters life;  
 A master pleased; servants that ne'er deceive;  
 A charming form; a mind no sorrows grieve;  
     A mouth in wisdom proved that makes not strife.  
 These to his favourites being pleased allows  
 Hari, of whom the world grows amorous.

## THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

All varying Scriptures that the earth divide,  
 Have yet one common rule that need o'erride  
 Dogma nor rite, nor any creed offend;  
 All to their heavens by one sole path intend.  
 'Tis this:—Abstain from slaughter; other's wealth  
 To covet cease, and in thy speech no stealth  
 Of falsehood harbour; give in season due  
 According to thy power; from ribald view  
 Or word keep far of woman, wife or maid;  
 Be mild obedience to thy elders paid;  
 Dam longing like a river; each act beneath  
 Show mercy and kindness to all things that breathe.

### GREAT AND MEANER SPIRITS

Some from high action through base fear refrain;  
The path is difficult, the way not plain.  
Others more noble to begin, are stayed  
By a few failures. Great spirits undismayed  
Abandon never what once to do they swore.  
Baffled and beaten back, they spring once more,  
Buffeted and borne down, rise up again,  
And, full of wounds, come on like iron men.

### THE NARROW WAY

Kind to be, yet immutably be just;  
To find all baser act too hard to do,—  
Yea, though not doing shatter our life to dust;—  
Contempt that will not to the evil sue;  
Not to the friend that's poor our need to state;  
Baffled by fortune still erect to stand;  
Being small to tread in footprints of the great;  
Who for weak men such rugged path has planned,  
Harder to tread than edge of this sharp brand?

## On Pride and Heroism

### LION-HEART

The manèd lion, first of kingly names,  
Magnanimous and famed, though worn with age,  
Wasted with hunger, blunted his keen edge  
And low the splendid spirit in him flames,  
Not therefore will with wretched grass assuage  
His famished pangs as graze the deer and bull.  
Rather his dying breath collects desire,  
Leaping once more from shattered brows to pull  
Of the great tuskèd elephants mad with ire  
His sovereign banquet fierce and masterful.

### THE WAY OF THE LION

The dog with a poor bone is satisfied,  
Meatless, with bits of fat and sinew greased,  
Nor is his hunger with such remnants eased.  
Not so the kingly lion in his pride!  
He lets the jackal go grazed by his claw  
And slays the tuskèd kings. Such Nature's law;  
Each being pitches his high appetite  
At even with his courage and his might.

### A CONTRAST

The dog may servile fawn upon the hand  
That feeds him, with his tail at wag, nor pain  
In crouching and his abject rollings bland  
With upward face and belly all in vain:  
The elephant to countless flatteries  
Returns a quiet look in steadfast eyes.

### THE WHEEL OF LIFE

The world goes round and, as returns the wheel,  
All things that die must yet again be born:  
His birth is birth indeed by whose return  
His race and country grandeur's summits scale.

### AUT CÆSAR AUT NULLUS

Two fates alone strong haughty minds endure,  
Of worth convinced;—on the world's forehead proud  
Singly to bloom exalted o'er the crowd,  
Or wither in the wilderness obscure.

## MAGNANIMITY

My brother, exalt thyself though in o'erthrow!  
 Five noble planets through these spaces roll,  
 Jupiter is of them;—not on these he leaps,  
 Râhu,\* the immortal demon of eclipse,  
 In his high magnanimity of soul.

Smit with God's thunders only his head he keeps,  
 Yet seizes in his brief and gloomy hour  
 Of vengeance the great luminous kings of heaven,  
 Day's Lord and the light to whom night's soul is given;  
 He scorns to strive with things of lesser power.

## THE MOTION OF GIANTS

On his wide hood as on a painted shield  
 Bears up the rangèd worlds, Infinite, the Snake;  
 Him in the giant midmost of his back  
 The eternal Tortoise brooks, whom the great field  
 Of vague and travelling waters ceaselessly  
 Encompass with the proud unfathomed sea.  
 O easy mights and marvellous of the great,  
 Whose simplest action is yet vast with fate!

\*Rahu, the Titan, stole or seized part of the nectar which rose from the world-ocean at the churning by the Gods and Titans and was appropriated by the Gods. For this violence he was smitten in two by the discus of Vishnu; but as he had drunk the nectar, he remains immortal and seeks always to revenge himself by swallowing the Sun and Moon who had detected his theft. The Tortoise mentioned in the next epigram upheld the mountain Mandar, which was the stick of the churning. The Great Snake Ananta was the rope of the churning, he on whose hood the earth now rests.



## MAINAK

O child of the immortal mountains hoar,  
Mainak,\* far better had this been to bear  
The bleeding wings that furious Indra tore,  
The thunder's scars that with disastrous roar  
Vomiting lightnings made the heavens one flare,-  
Not, not this refuge in the cool wide sea  
While all thy suffering people cried to thee.

## NOBLE RESENTMENT

The crystal hath no sense disgrace to know,  
Yet blazes angry when the sun's feet rouse;  
Shall man the high-spirited, the orgulous,  
Brook insult vile from fellow or from foe?

## AGE AND GENIUS

Nature, not age is the high spirit's cause  
That burns in mighty hearts and genius high.  
Lo, on the rutting elephant's tuskèd jaws  
The infant lion leaps invincibly.

\*The mountains had formerly wings and could move about,—to the great inconvenience of everybody: Indra, attacked by them, smote off their wings with the thunderbolt. Mainak, son of Himalay, took refuge in the sea.

# On Wealth

## THE PRAYER TO MAMMON

Cast birth into the nether Hell; let all  
The useless tribe of talents farther fall;  
Throw virtue headlong from a rock and turn  
High nobleness into the fire to burn;  
The heroic heart let some swift thunder rive,  
Our enemy that hinders us to live;  
Wealth let us only keep; this one thing less,  
All those become as weeds and emptiness.

## A MIRACLE

Behold a wonder mid the sons of men!  
The man is undiminished he we knew,  
Unmaimed his organs and his senses keen  
Even as of old, his actions no-wise new,  
Voice, tone and words the same we heard before,  
The brain's resistless march too as of yore;  
Only the flattering heat of wealth is gone,  
And lo! the whole man changed, his praises done.

### WEALTH THE SORCERER

He who has wealth, has birth ; gold who can spill,  
Is scholar, doctor, critic, what you will ;  
For who has golden coin, has golden tongue,  
Is glorious, gracious, beautiful and young ;  
All virtues, talents, fames to gold repair  
And lodge in gold leaving the poor man bare.

### TWO KINDS OF LOSS

These things are deaths, ill-counsel ruining kings,  
The son by fondling spoiled, by him the race,  
Attachment, to the sage's heart that clings,  
And natural goodness marred by company base,  
The Brahmin by scant study unbrahminised,  
Sweet shame by wine o'erthrown, by wandering long  
Affection waning, friendship true unprized,  
Tillage uncared, good fortune follies wrong ;  
But wealth in double way men may reject,  
Nobly by giving, poorly by neglect.

### THE TRIPLE WAY OF WEALTH

Three final roads wealth takes and only three,  
To give, enjoy or lose it utterly :  
And his whose miser hand to give is slow  
Nor yet enjoys, the worst third way shall go.

## THE BEAUTY OF GIVING

Be not a miser of thy strength and store;  
     Oft in a wounded grace more beauty is.  
 The jewel which the careful gravers score;  
     The sweet fair girl-wife broken with bridal bliss,  
 The rut-worn tusker, the autumnal stream  
     With its long beaches dry and slender flood;  
 The hero wreathed with victory's diadem,  
     Adorned with wounds and glorious with his blood;  
 The moon's last disc; rich men of their bright dross,  
 By gifts disburdened, fairer shine by loss.

## CIRCUMSTANCE

There is no absoluteness in objects. See  
     This indigent man aspire as to a prize  
 To handfuls of mere barley-bread! yet he  
     A few days past, fed full with luxuries,  
 Held for a trifle earth and all her skies.  
     Not in themselves are objects great or small,  
 But circumstance works on the elastic mind,  
     To widen or contract. The view is all,  
 And by our inner state the world's defined.

### ADVICE TO A KING

He fosters, King, the calf who milks the cow,  
And thou who takest of the wide earth tax,  
Foster the people; with laborious brow  
And sleepless vigil strive till nought it lacks.  
Then shall the earth become thy faery tree  
Of plenty, pleasure, fame, felicity.

### POLICY

Often she lies, wears sometimes brow of truth,  
Kind sometimes, sometimes ravening-merciless;  
Now open-handed, full of bounty and grace,  
And now a harpy; now sweet honey and ruth  
Flows from her tongue, now menace harsh or stern;  
This moment with a bottomless desire  
She gathers millions in, the next will tire,—  
Endless expense takes prodigally its turn.  
Thus like a harlot changes momentarily  
In princes the chameleon Policy.

### THE USES OF HIGH STANDING

Men highly placed by six good gifts are high.  
The first is noble liberality;  
The second, power that swift obedience brings;  
Service to holy men and holy things  
Comes next; then fame; protection then of friends;  
Pleasure in pleasant things the great list ends.  
Whose rising with these six is unallied,  
What seeks he by a mighty prince's side?

## REMONSTRANCE WITH THE SUPPLIANT

What the Creator on thy forehead traced  
 As on a plate of bronze indelibly,  
 Expect that much or little, worst or best,  
 Wherever thou dwell, nobly or wretchedly,  
 Since thou shalt not have less, though full of pain  
 In deserts waterless mid savage men  
 Thou wander sole; nor on Olympus hoar  
 Ranked amid mighty Gods shalt thou have more.  
 Therefore be royal-hearted still and bold,  
 O man, nor thy proud crest in vain abase  
 Cringing to rich men for their gathered gold.  
 From the small well or ocean fathomless  
 The jar draws equally what it can hold.

## THE RAINLARK TO THE CLOUD

You opulent clouds that in high heavens ride,  
 Is't fame you seek? but surely all men know  
 To you the darting rainlarks homage owe!  
 Hold you then back your showers, because your pride  
 By our low suings must be gratified?

## TO THE RAINLARK

O rainlark, rainlark, flitting near the cloud,  
 Attentive hear, winged friend, a friendly word.  
 All vapours are not like, the heavens that shroud  
 Darkening; some drench the earth for noble fruit,  
 Some are vain thunderers wandering by with bruit:  
 Sue not to each thou seest then, O bird;  
 If humbly entreat thou must, let few have heard.

## On the Wicked

### EVIL NATURE

A heart unpitying, brawling vain and rude,  
An eye to others' wives and wealth inclined,  
Impatience of true friends and of the good,—  
These things are self-born in the evil mind.

### THE HUMAN COBRA

Avoid the evil man with learning crowned.  
Lo, the dread cobra, all his hood a gem  
Of glory, yet he crawls upon the ground.  
Fear'st thou him less for that bright diadem?

## VIRTUE AND SLANDER

A spiritless dull block call modesty;  
     Love of long fasts and holy vows must be  
     Mere shows, yon pure heart but a Pharisee,  
 The world-renouncing sage a fool; the high  
 World-conquering hero's taxed with cruelty.  
 This sweet word's baseness, that great orator  
     A windbag, and the great spirit furious pride,  
 And calm patience an impotent weakness poor.  
     Thus the base-natured all high things deride.  
 Judged by the slanderous tongue, the uncandid eyes,  
 What brightest virtue turns not blackest vice?

## REALITIES

Greed if thou hast, thou art of sin secure:  
     Being treacherous, of what heinous fault hast need?  
 No distant temple wants whose soul is pure:  
     Heart's truth is more than penance, vow or creed.  
 With natural goodness, why mere virtues pile?  
     The soul being great, a royal crown were poor;  
 Good books thou hast, rubies were surplus vile;  
     When shame has pierced the heart, can death do more?



### SEVEN GRIEFS

Seven griefs are as seven daggers in my heart,—  
    To see a lake without its lilled bloom,  
The moon grow beggared of her radiant part,  
    Sweet woman's beauty fade towards the tomb,  
A noble hug his wealth, a good man gone  
    Down in the press of miseries, a fair  
    And vacant face when knowledge is not there,  
A base man standing by a monarch's throne.

### THE FRIENDSHIP OF TYRANTS

Tyrants have neither kin nor lover. Fire  
    Accepts the rich man's offerings; at the end  
Shall these then slake its wrathful swift desire?  
    Nay, let him touch it! It will spare its friend!

### THE HARD LOT OF THE COURTIER

Hard is the courtier's lot who fain would please.  
    Being silent, "Lo the dumb man!" they gibe; if speech  
    Eloquent edge his wit, "He seeks to teach,  
The chatterer!" else, "Hark to his flatteries!"  
Rude, if he sit near; far,— "What want of ease!"  
    Enduring insult, "Coward!" if he spurn  
The injurer, "Surely a spawn of parents base!"  
    Such service is in courts, whose laws to learn  
Wise sages are perplexed, or tread its ways.

## THE UPSTART

Yea, how this high sun burns that was so low,  
 Enlightening with his favours all things base!  
 Hating all goods, with chainless license vile  
 Of those his filthy deeds makes arrogant show  
 Obscurely engendered in his unseen days  
 Ere sudden fortune raised from miry soil.  
 No virtue now, genius nor merit's safe  
 From vulture eyes that at all cleanness chafe.

## TWO KINDS OF FRIENDSHIP

Like shadows of the afternoon and morn  
 Friendship in good men is and in the base;  
 All vast the lewd man's in its first embrace,  
 But lessens and wears away; the other's, born  
 A dwarfish thing, grows giant-like apace.

## NATURAL ENMITIES

Trust not thy innocence, nor say, "No foe  
 I have the world through;" other is the world.  
 The deer's content with simple grass, yet bow  
 Of hunter fears; the fisher's net is hurled  
 To catch the water's innocents; his high  
 And simple life contented leads the good,  
 Yet by the evil heart insatiably  
 With causeless hatred finds himself pursued.

## On Virtue

### DESCRIPTION OF THE VIRTUOUS

Homage to him who keeps his heart a book  
For stainless matters, prone great talk to prize  
And nearness of the good; whose faithful look  
Rejoices in his own dear wife, whose eyes  
Are humble to the Master good and wise;

A passion high for learning, noble fear  
Of public shame who feels; treasures the still  
Sweet love of God; to self no minister,  
But schools that ravener to his lordlier will,  
Far from the evil herd on virtue's hill.

### THE NOBLE NATURE

Eloquence in the assembly; in the field  
The puissant arm, the lion's heart; proud looks  
Unshaken in defeat; but modest-kind  
Mercy when victory crowns; passionate for books  
High love of learning, thoughts to fame inclined;—  
These things are natural to the noble mind.

## THE HIGH AND DIFFICULT ROAD

To give in secret as beneath a shroud;  
 To honour all who to thy threshold come;  
 Do good by stealth and of thy deeds be dumb,  
 But of another's noble acts be proud  
 And vaunt them in the senate and the crowd;  
 To keep low minds in fortune's arrogant day;  
 To speak of foemen without scorn or rage;  
 What finger appointed first this roughest way  
 Of virtue narrower than the falchion's edge?

## ADORNMENT

The hand needs not a bracelet for its pride,  
 High liberality its greatness is;  
 The head no crown wants to show deified;  
 Fallen at the Master's feet it best doth please.  
 Truth-speaking makes the face more bright to shine,  
 Deep study girds the brow with diamond rays;  
 Strength and not gold in conquering arms divine  
 Triumphs; calm purity the heart arrays.  
 Nature's great men have these for wealth and gem;  
 Riches they need not, nor a diadem.

## THE SOFTNESS AND HARDNESS OF THE NOBLE

Being fortunate, how the noble heart grows soft  
 As lilies! but in calamity's rude shocks  
 Rugged and high like a wild mountain's rocks  
 It fronts the thunders, granite piled aloft.

### THE POWER OF COMPANY

Behold the water's way,—on iron red  
    When it falls hissing, not a trace remains,  
    Yet 'tis the same that on the lotus shines,  
A dewy thing like pearls,—yea, pearl indeed  
    Turns when the oyster-shell receives and heaven  
    To those rain-bringing stars their hour has given.  
High virtue, vice or inconspicuous mean  
'Tis company that moulds in things or men.

### THE THREE BLESSINGS

He is a son whose noble deeds and high  
    His loving father's heart rejoice;  
She is a wife whose only jewellery  
    Is her dear husband's joy and bliss;  
He the true friend whose actions are the same  
In peaceful days or hours of bale and shame;  
    These three who wins, finds earth his Paradise.

## THE WAYS OF THE GOOD

Who would not honour good men and revere  
     Whose loftiness by modesty is shown,  
 Whose merits not by their own vaunts appear,  
     Best in their constant praise of others known,  
 And for another's good each power to brace  
 To passionate effort is their selfishness.

Hark to their garrulous slanderer's gurge of blame  
     Foaming with censure violent and rude!  
 Yet they revile not back, but put to shame  
     By their sweet patience and calm fortitude.  
 Such are their marvellous moods, their noble ways,  
 Whom men delight to honour and to praise.

## WEALTH OF KINDNESS

'Tis more than earrings when the ear inclines  
     To wisdom; giving bracelets rich exceeds.  
 So the beneficent heart's deep-storèd mines  
     Are worked for ore of sweet compassionate deeds,  
 And with that gold the very body shines.

## THE GOOD FRIEND

Thus is the good friend pictured by the pens  
     Of good men:—still with gentle hand he turns  
 From sin and shame his friend, to noble gains  
     Still spurs him on; deep in his heart inurns  
 His secret errors, blares his parts abroad,  
 Gives at his need, nor takes the traitor's road  
     Leaving with facile wings when fortune spurns.

### THE NATURE OF BENEFICENCE

Freely the sun gives all his beams to wake  
The lotus slumbering in the darkened lake;  
The moon unasked expends her gentle light,  
Wooing to bloom her lily of the night;  
Unasked the cloud its watery burden gives.  
The noble nature in beneficence lives;  
Unsought, unsued, not asking kindness back  
Does good in secret for that good's sole sake.

### THE ABOMINATION OF WICKEDNESS

Rare are the hearts that for another's joy  
Fling from them self and hope of their own bliss;  
Himself unhurt for other's good to try  
Man's impulse and his common nature is:  
But they who for their poor and selfish aims  
Hurt others, are but fiends with human names.  
Who hurt their brother-men, themselves unhelped,  
What they are we know not, nor what horror whelped.

## WATER AND MILK

By water and sweet milk example Love.  
 Milk all its sweetness to the water gives,  
 For in one wedded self their friendship lives;  
 And when hot pangs the one to anguish move,  
 The other immolates itself to fire.  
 To steal his friend's grief is a friend's desire.  
 He seeing his friend's hard state is minded too  
 To seek the flame; but happily again  
 Wedded to him is eased of all his pain.  
 This friendship is, one heart that's shared by two.

## ALTRUISM OCEANIC

Here Vishnu sleeps, there find his foes their rest;  
 The hills have taken refuge; serried lie  
 Their armies in deep Ocean's sheltering breast;  
 The clouds of doom are of his heart possessed,  
 He harbours nether fire whence he must die.  
 Cherisher of all in vast equality,  
 Lo, the wide strong sublime and patient sea!



## THE ARYAN ETHIC

Hear the whole Gospel and the Law thereto:—  
    Speak truth, and in wise company abide;  
    Slay lust, thine enemy; abandon pride;  
Patience and sweet forgiveness to thee woo;  
Set not in sin thy pleasure, but in God;  
Follow the path high feet before thee trod;

Give honour to the honourable; conceal  
    Thy virtues with a pudent veil of shame,  
    Yet cherish to the end a stainless fame;  
Speak sweetness to thy haters and their weal  
Pursue; show pity to unhappy men,  
Lift up the fallen, heal the sufferer's pain.

## THE ALTRUIST

How rare is he who for his fellows cares!  
His mind, speech, body all are as pure jars  
Full of his soul's sweet nectar; so he goes  
Filling the world with rows on shining rows  
Of selfless actions ranked like the great stars.

He loves man so that he in others' hearts  
Finding an atom even of noble parts  
Builds it into a mountain and thereon  
His soul grows radiant like a flower full-blown;  
Others are praised, *his* mind with pleasure starts.

## MOUNTAIN MOLOY

Legends of golden hills the fancy please,  
But though they were real silver and solid gold,  
Yet are the trees they foster only trees.

Moloy shall have my vote with whom, 'tis told,  
Harbouring the linden, pine and basest thorn  
Ennobled turn to scent and earth adorn.

# On Firmness

## GODS

Cease never from the work thou hast begun  
Till thou accomplish. Such the great Gods be,  
Nor paused for gems unknown beneath the Sun,  
Nor feared for the huge poisons of the sea,  
Then only ceased when nectar's self was won.

## THE MAN OF HIGH ACTION

Happiness is nothing, sorrow nothing. He  
Recks not of these whom his clear thoughts impel  
To action, whether little and miserably  
He fare on roots or softly dine and well,  
Whether bare ground receive his sleep or bed  
With smoothest pillows ease his pensive head,  
Whether in rags or heavenly robes he dwell.

## ORNAMENTS

What is an ornament? Courtesy in high place,  
 Speech temperate in the hero, innocence  
 In high philosophers, and wrathlessness  
 In hermits, and in riches noble expense.  
 Sincerity and honest meaning plain  
 Save outward holiness, mercy the strong  
 Adorns and modesty most learned men;  
 One grace to every station can belong.  
 Cause of all other gems, of all is blent  
 Virtue, the universal ornament.

## THE IMMUTABLE COURAGE

If men praise thee, O man, 'tis well; nor ill,  
 If they condemn. Let fortune curst or boon  
 Enter thy doors or leave them as she will;  
 Though death expect thee ere yon sinking moon  
 Vanish or wait till unborn stars give light,  
 The firm high soul remains immutable  
 Nor by one step will deviate from the right.

## THE BALL

Lo, as a ball that, by the player's palm  
 Smit downward, falls but to again rebound,  
 So the high virtuous man hurled to the ground  
 Bends not to fortune long his spirit calm.

## WORK AND IDLENESS

Their bitterest enemy in their bodies pent  
Men cherish, idleness. Be in thy breast  
The tireless gust of work thy mighty guest,  
Man's ceaseless helper, whose great aid once lent  
Thy strength shall fail not, nor thy head be bent.

## THE SELF-RELIANCE OF THE WISE

The tree once pruned shall seek again the skies,  
The moon in heaven waning wax once more:  
Wise men grieve not nor vex their soul with sighs  
Though the world tread them down with savage roar;  
Knowing their strength, they husband it to rise.

# On Fate

## FATE MASTERS THE GODS

Brihuspathy\* his path of vantage shows,  
The red disastrous thunder leaves his hand  
Obedient, the high Gods in burning rows  
His battled armies make, high heaven's his fort,  
Iravath swings his huge trunk for his sport,  
The Almighty's guardian favours over him stand;-  
That Indra with these strengths, this lordship proud  
Is broken by his foes in battle loud,  
Come then, bow down to Fate. Alas, the vain  
Heroisms, virtues, toils of glorious man!

## A PARABLE OF FATE

A serpent in a basket crushed despaired,  
His organs all with hunger weak and worn,  
While patiently at night the mouse prepared  
A hole in that self basket. Ere the morn  
By his own industry, such Nature's law,  
The patient labourer fills the serpent's maw.  
He with that food replenished, by the way  
The mouse had made escaped. O world, behold  
The mighty master of thy sad decay  
And fortunate rising, Fate, the godhead old.

\*Brihuspathy is councillor to Indra, the King of Heaven, and spiritual guide of the Gods. Iravath is Indra's elephant.

## FATE AND FREEWILL

“ The actions of our former life control  
    This life's sweet fruit or bitter; even the high  
    Intellect follows where these point its eye.”  
All this is true,—O yet, be wise of soul,  
Think ere thou act, thou who wouldst reach the goal.

## ILL LUCK

A bald man, goes the story, when the noon  
Beat his plagued brows into a fiery swoon,  
Desiring dimness and cool place was led  
By subtle Fate into a high palm's shade.  
There where he shelter hoped, a giant fruit  
Crashed on his pate and broke with horrid bruit.  
Wherever the unfortunate hides his head,  
Grief and disaster in his footprints tread.

## FATE MASTERS ALL

I saw the brilliant moon eclipsed, the sun  
    Baulked darkly of his radiant pilgrimage,  
And halter-bound the forest's mighty one,  
    The iron-coiled huge Python in a cage;  
Then saw the wise skilled brain a pauper, and said  
“ Fate only is strong whose hand on all is laid.”

### THE FOLLIES OF FATE

Sometimes the gods build up a very man  
Whom genius, virtue, glory crowd to bless,  
And Earth with him adorned grows measureless.  
Then if death early spoil that noble plan,  
Ah, blind stupidity of Fate that throws  
From her brow the jewel, from her breast the rose!

### THE SCRIPT OF FATE

When on the desert-bramble's boughs you find  
Leafage nor flower, blame not the bounteous Spring!  
Is it the sun's fault if the owlet blind  
Sees not by day so radiant-bright a thing?  
Though down the rainlark's throat no sweet drops flow,  
Yet for his falling showers the high cloud praise.  
What Fate has written in power upon the brow,  
Where is the hand so mighty it shall rase?



## On Karma\*

### ACTION BE MAN'S GOD

Whom shall men worship? The high Gods? But they  
Suffer fate's masteries, enjoy and rue.  
Whom shall men worship? Fate's stern godhead? Nay,  
Fate is no godhead. Many fruits or few  
Their actions bring to men,—that settled price  
She but deals out, a steward dumb, precise.  
Let action be man's God, o'er whom even Fate  
Can rule not, nor his puissance abrogate.

\*There is a distinction, not always strictly observed, between Fate and Karma. Karma is the principle of Action in the universe with its stream of cause and infallible effect, and for man the sum of his past actions whose results reveal themselves not at once, but in the dispensation of Time, partly in this life, mostly in lives to come. Fate seems a more mysterious power imposing itself on men, despite all their will and endeavour, from outside them and above—*daivam*, a power from the Gods.

## THE MIGHT OF WORKS

Bow ye to Karma who with puissant hand  
 Like a vast potter all the universe planned,  
 Shut the Creator in and bade him work  
 In the dim-glinting womb and luminous murk;  
 By whom impelled high Vishnu hurled to earth  
 Travels his tenfold depths and whorls of birth;  
 Who leading mighty Rudra by the hand  
 Compels to wander strange from land to land,—  
 A vagrant begging with a skull for bowl  
 And suppliant palms, who is yet the world's high Soul.  
 Lo, through the skies for ever this great Sun  
 Wheels circling round and round by Karma spun.

## KARMA

It is not beauty's charm nor lineage high,  
 It is not virtue, wisdom, industry,  
 Service, nor careful arduous toil that can  
 Bring forth the fruits of his desire to man;  
 Old merit mind's strong asceticism had stored  
 Returns to him with blessing or a sword,  
 His own past deeds that flower soon or late  
 Each in its season on the tree of Fate.

### PROTECTION FROM BEHIND THE VEIL

Safe is the man good deeds forgotten claim,  
In pathless deserts or in dangerous war  
Or by armed foes enringed; sea and fierce flame  
May threaten, death's door waiting swing ajar;  
Slumbering or careless though his foemen find,  
Yea, though they seize him, though they smite or bind,  
On ocean wild or on the cliff's edge sheer  
His deeds walk by his side and guard from fear;  
Through death and birth they bore him and are here.

### THE STRENGTH OF SIMPLE GOODNESS

Toiler ascetic, who with passionate breath  
Swelllest huge holinesses,—vain thy faith!  
Good act adore, the simple goddess plain,  
Who gives the fruit thou seekest with such pain.  
Her touch can turn the lewd man into a saint,  
Inimitably her quiet magic lent  
Change fools to sages and hidden mysteries show  
Beyond eye's reach or brain's attempt to know,  
Fierce enemies become friends and poisons ill  
Transform in a moment to nectar at her will.

### FORESIGHT AND VIOLENCE

Good be the act or faulty, its result  
The wise man painfully forecasting first  
Then does; who in mere heedless force exult,  
Passionate and violent, taste a fruit accursed.  
The Fury keeps till death her baleful course  
And blights their life, tormenting with remorse.

## MISUSE OF LIFE

This noble earth, this place for glorious deeds  
 The ill-starred man who reaching nowise heeds,  
 Nor turns his soul to energy austere,  
 With little things content or idlesse drear,—  
 He is like one who gets an emerald pot  
 To bake him oil-cakes on a fire made hot  
 With scented woods, or who with golden share  
 For sorry birthwort ploughs a fertile fair  
 Sweet soil, or cuts rich camphor piece by piece  
 To make a hedge for fennel. Not for this  
 In the high human form he walks great earth  
 After much labour getting goodliest birth.

## FIXED FATE

Dive if thou wilt into the huge deep sea,  
     The inaccessible far mountains climb,  
 Vanquish thy foes in battle fiercely,  
     All arts and every science, prose and rhyme,  
 Tillage and trade in one mind bring to dwell,—  
     Yea, rise to highest effort, ways invent  
 And like a bird the skies immeasurable  
     Voyage; all this thou mayst, but not compel  
 What was not to be, nor what was prevent.

**FLOWERS FROM A HIDDEN ROOT**

With store of noble deeds who here arrives,  
Finds on this earth his well-earned Paradise.  
The lonely forest grows his kingly town  
Of splendour, every man has friendly eyes  
Seeing him, or the wide earth for his crown  
Is mined with gems and with rich plenty thrives.  
This high fate is his meed of former lives.

# Miscellaneous Verses

## DEFINITIONS

What is clear profit? Meeting with good men.  
A malady? Of incompetent minds the spell.  
What is a loss? Occasion given in vain.  
True skill of life? With heavenward thoughts to dwell.  
A hero? The heart that is o'er passion lord.  
A mistress? She to loving service sworn.  
Best wealth? Wisdom. True happiness? The sword  
Of one's own country, life where it was born.  
A kingdom? Swift obedience fruitful found  
At the low word from hearts of all around.

## A RARITY

Rich in sweet loving words, in harshness poor,  
From blame of others' lives averse, content  
With one dear wife and so heart-opulent,  
Candid and kindly, like an open door,  
Some here and there are found on teeming earth;  
Her fairest ornament is their quiet worth.

## THE FLAME OF THE SOUL

Insulted, wronged, oppressed the unshaken mind,  
Treasuring its strength, insurgent its high will,  
Towers always, though beat fiercely down to hell.  
The torch is to the inglorious soil declined,  
Its flame burns upward and unconquered still.

### THE CONQUEROR

That man whose soul bright beauty cannot pierce  
    With love's sweet burning javelins from her eyes,  
Nor sorrow torture his heart, nor passions fierce  
    Miserably over his senses tyrannize,  
Conquers the world by his high-seated will,  
The man well-balanced, noble, wise and still.

### THE HERO'S TOUCH

Touched by one hero's tread how vibrating  
    Earth starts as if sun-visited, ablaze,  
    Vast, wonderful, young! Man's colourless petty days  
Bloom suddenly and seem a grandiose thing.

### THE POWER OF GOODNESS

The bloom of natural goodness like a flower  
    Is Nature's darling, all her creatures prize,  
And on whose body's stock its fragrant power  
    Blossoms, all fiercest things can humanise.  
For him red fire becomes like water pale and cool,  
For him heaven-threatening Ocean sinks into a pool  
Of quiet azure; for him the lion's heart  
    Tames its dire hungers to be like the hind's,  
And the fell snake unsoothed by music's art  
    Upon his brows in floral wreaths he binds.  
Poisons for him to nectar change; impassable hills  
Droop, gentle slopes; strong blessings grow from ruthless ills.

## TRUTH

Dear as his own sweet mother to the man  
Of truth his word is, dear as his heart's blood.  
Truth, 'tis the mother of his soul's great brood,  
High modesty and virtue's lordly clan.  
Exceeding pure of heart as to a youth  
His mother, and like a mother to him cleaves  
This sweet proud goddess. Rather life he leaves  
And happiness puts away, not divine Truth.  
Others clasp some dear vice, gold, woman, wine;  
He keeps for Truth his passion fiery and fine.

## WOMAN'S HEART

More hard the heart of woman is to seize  
Than an unreal mirrored face, more hard  
Her moods to follow than on mountains barred  
With rocks that skirt a dreadful precipice  
A dangerous luring pathway near the skies.

And transient is her frail exacting love  
Like dew that on some lotus' petal lies.  
As with rich fatal shoots an upas-grove,  
Woman with faults is born, with faults she grows.  
Thorns are her nature, but her face the rose.



### FAME'S SUFFICIENCY

“ Victory is his on earth or Paradise,  
The high heart slain in battle face to face.”  
Let be your empire and your golden skies;  
For him enough that friends and foemen praise  
And with fame's rumour in his ears he dies.

### MAGNANIMITY

The world teems miracles, breeds grandest things,  
But Râhu of all most marvellous and great  
Or the vast Boar on white tusks delicate  
Like buds who bears up earth, else chaos rings.  
Râhu, cleft, trunkless, deathless, passionate,  
Leaps on his foemen and can overbear,  
A miracle, then, greater miracle, spare.

### MAN INFINITE

Earth is hemmed in with Ocean's vaster moan;  
The world of waters flows not infinitely;  
A high unwearied traveller, the Sun  
Maps out the limits of the vaulted sky.  
On every creature born a seal is set  
With limits budded in, kept separate.  
Only man's soul looks out with luminous eyes  
Upon the worlds illimitably wise.

### THE PROUD SOUL'S CHOICE

But one God to worship, hermit Shiv or puissant Vishnu high;  
But one friend to clasp, the first of men or proud Philosophy;  
But one home to live in, Earth's imperial city or the wild;  
But one wife to kiss, Earth's sweetest face or Nature, God's own  
child.  
Either in your world the mightiest or my desert solitary.

### THE WAVERER

Seven mountains, eight proud elephants, the Snake,  
The Tortoise help to bear this Earth on high,  
Yet is she troubled, yet her members shake!  
Symbol of minds impure, perplexed and wry.  
Though constant be the strife and claim, the goal  
Escapes the sin-driven and the doubting soul.

### GASTER ANAIDES

Nay, is there any in this world who soon  
Comes not to heel, his mouth being filled with food?  
The inanimate tabour, lo, with flour well-glued  
Begins with sweeter voice its song to croon.

### THE RARITY OF THE ALTRUIST

Low minds enough there are who only care  
    To fill their lusts with pleasure, maws with food.  
Where shall we find him, the high soul and rare  
    To whom the good of others is his good?  
First of the saints is he, first of the wise.

The Red Mare of the Ocean drinks the seas  
    Her own insatiable fire to feed;  
    The cloud for greater ends exacts his need,  
The parching heats to cool, Earth's pain to ease.  
    Wealth's sole good is to heal the unhappy's sighs.

### STATESMAN AND POET

How like are these whose labour does not cease,  
    Statesman and poet, in their several cares;  
Anxious their task, no work of splendid ease!  
    One ranges far for costly words, prepares  
Pure forms and violence popular disdains,  
    The voice of rare assemblies strives to find,  
Slowly adds phrase to noble phrase and means  
    Each line around the human heart to wind.  
The statesman seeks the nation's wealth from far;  
    Not to the easy way of violence prone  
He puts from him the brutal clang of war  
    And seeks a better kind dominion,  
To please the just in their assemblies high,  
    Slowly to build his careful steps between  
A noble line of linkèd policy,—  
    He shapes his acts a nation's heart to win.  
    Their burden and their toil make these two kin.

## THE WORDS OF THE WISE

Serve thou the wise and good, covet their speech  
 Although to trivial daily things it keeps.  
 Their casual thoughts are foam from solemn deeps;  
 Their passing words make Scripture, Science; rich,  
 Though seeming poor, their common actions teach.

## NOBLESSE OBLIGE

If some day by some chance God thought this good  
 And lilies were abolished from the earth,  
 Would yet the swan like fowls of baser birth  
 Scatter a stinking dunghill for his food?

## THE ROOTS OF ENJOYMENT

That at thy door proud-necked the high-foaming steeds  
 Prance spirited and stamp in pride the ground  
 And the huge elephants stand, their temple's bound  
 Broken with rut, like slumbrous mountains round,—  
 That in harmonious concert fluted reeds,  
 The harp's sweet moan, the tabour and the drum  
 And conch-shell in their married moments come  
 Waking at dawn in thy imperial dome,—  
 Thy pride, thy riches, thy full-sated needs,  
 That like a king of gods thou dwell'st on earth,—  
 From duties high-fulfilled these joys had birth;  
 All pleasant things washes to men of worth  
 The accumulated surge of righteous deeds.

### NATURAL QUALITIES

Three things are faithful to their place decreed,-  
Its splendour as of blood in the lotus red,  
Kind actions, of the noble nature part,  
And in bad men a cold and cruel heart.

### DEATH, NOT VILENESS

Better to a dire verge by foemen borne,  
O man, thy perishable body dashed  
Upon some ragged beach by Ocean lashed,  
Hurled on the rocks with bleeding limbs and torn;

Better thy hand on the dire cobra's tooth  
Sharp-venomed or to anguish in the fire,  
Not at the baser bidding of desire  
Thy heart's high virtue lost and natural truth.

### MAN'S WILL

Renounce thy vain attempt, presumptuous man,  
Who think'st and labourest long impossibly  
That the great heart for misery falter can:  
Fruitless thy hope that cruel fall to see.  
Dull soul! these are not petty transient hills,  
Himâlay and Mahendra and the rest,  
Nor your poor oceans, their fixed course and wills  
That yield by the last cataclysm oppressed.  
Man's will his shattered world can long survive:  
When all has perished, it can dare to live.

## THE SPLENDID HARLOT

Victory's a harlot full of glorious lust  
Who seeks the hero's breast with wounds deep-scored,  
Hate's passionate dints like love's! So when the sword  
Has ploughed its field, leap there she feels she must.

## FATE

Lo, the moon who gives to healing herbs their virtue, nectar's  
home,  
Food immortalising,—every wise physician's radiant Som,\*  
Even him consumption seizes in its cruel clinging arms.  
Then be ready! Fate takes all her toll and heeds not gifts nor  
charms.

## THE TRANSIENCE OF WORLDLY REWARDS

Your gleaming palaces of brilliant stone,  
Your bright-limbed girls for grace and passion made,  
Your visible glory of dominion,  
Your sceptre and wide canopy displayed,  
These things you hold, but with what labour won  
Weaving with arduous toil a transient thread  
Of shining deeds on careful virtue spun!  
Which easily broken, all at once is sped;  
As when in lover's amorous war undone  
A pearl-string, on all sides the bright pearls shed  
Collapse and vanish from the unremembering sun.

\*Soma, the moon, god of the immortalising nectar, the Vedic Soma-wine.



## **HYMN TO THE MOTHER**





# Hymn to the Mother

## BANDEMATARAM

Mother, I bow to thee!  
Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with thy orchard gleams,  
Cool with thy winds of delight,  
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,  
Mother free.  
Glory of moonlight dreams  
Over thy branches and lordly streams,—  
Clad in thy blossoming trees,  
Mother, giver of ease,  
Laughing low and sweet!  
Mother, I kiss thy feet,  
Speaker sweet and low!  
Mother, to thee I bow.  
Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,  
When the swords flash out in seventy million hands  
And seventy million voices roar  
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?  
With many strengths who art mighty and stored,  
To thee I call, Mother and Lord!  
Thou who savest, arise and save!  
To her I cry who ever her foemen drave  
Back from plain and sea  
And shook herself free.  
Thou art wisdom, thou art law,  
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,  
Thou the love divine, the awe

In our hearts that conquers death.  
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,  
Thine the beauty, thine the charm.  
Every image made divine  
In our temples is but thine.  
Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,  
With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,  
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,  
And the Muse a hundred-toned.  
Pure and perfect without peer,  
Mother, lend thine ear.  
Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with thy orchard gleams,  
Dark of hue, O candid-fair  
In thy soul, with jewelled hair  
And thy glorious smile divine,  
Loveliest of all earthly lands,  
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!  
Mother, mother mine!  
Mother sweet, I bow to thee  
Mother great and free!

## VIDULA



# Vidula

[This poem is based on a passage comprising four chapters (Adhyayas) in the Udyog-parva of the Mahabharata. It is not a close translation but a free poetic paraphrase of the subject-matter; it follows closely the sequence of the thoughts with occasional rearrangements, translates freely in parts, in others makes some departures or adds, develops and amplifies to bring out fully the underlying spirit and idea. The style of the original is terse, brief, packed and allusive, sometimes knotted into a pregnant obscurity by the drastic economy of word and phrase. It would have been impossible to preserve effectively in English such a style; a looser fullness of expression has been preferred sacrificing the letter to the spirit. The text of a Calcutta edition has been followed throughout. The whole passage with its envoi or self-laudatory close reads like an independent poem dovetailed into the vast epic.]

## I

Hearken to the ancient converse of which old traditions tell,  
Of the youthful Sunjoy with his mother the indomitable  
Vidula, the passionate princess, royal in her mood and form,  
Fiery-souled, the resolute speaker with her tameless heart of  
storm,  
High her fame in kingly senates where the nations' princes met,  
Eloquent and proud and learned, with a soul foreseeing fate.  
Conquered by the King of Sindhu, hurled down from his lofty  
throne,  
As he lay unnerved and abject, came she to her warlike son,  
Vidula, the passionate princess, and she spoke with burning eyes,  
Scourging him with words like flakes of fire, bidding him arise.  
"Son," she cried, "no son of mine to make thy mother's heart  
rejoice!  
Hark, thy foemen mock and triumph, yet to live is still thy choice.

Nor thy hero father got thee, nor I bore thee in my womb,  
 Random changeling from some world of petty souls and coward  
 gloom!

Passionless and abject nature, stripped and void of bold desire,  
 Nerveless of all masculine endeavour, without force and fire,  
 Reckon not thy name midst men who liest flinging manhood far.  
 Rise and bear thy yoke, thou warhorse, neighing for the crash of  
 war!

Make not great thy foemen with thy terrors, panic eyes behind.  
 Thou, a king's son, canst thou tremble? Be a king indeed in mind,  
 Soar up like a sudden eagle beating high against the wind.  
 Out, arise, thou coward! lie not thus upon the ground o'erthrown,  
 Shorn of pride, thy foes' delight, thy friends' shame, making  
 fruitless moan.

Easily a paltry river with the meagre floods o'erflows,  
 Easily the fieldmouse with her mite of grain contented goes,  
 Easily the coward ceases fainting from his great emprise.  
 Break the serpent's fangs between thy hands and perish, not as  
 dies

Impotent a whining dog, go deathward, but as circles o'er his prey,  
 But as wheels an angry falcon through the wide and azure day  
 Watching for his moment, thou in fearless silence wait thy time  
 Or with resonant and far-voiced challenge waken war sublime.  
 Wherefore like a dead thing thunder-blasted liest thou on the  
 ground?

Rise, thou coward, seek not slumber while the victors jeer around.  
 Turn not miserably to thy set, but smiting with the sword  
 Make the world re-echo! deem that thou wast born to be its lord,  
 Not with middle place content nor abject; all subjection spurn.  
 Stand erect, whate'er befall thee, roaring on thy hunters turn.  
 Blaze out like a firebrand even if for a moment burning high,  
 Not like the poor fire of husks that smoulders long, afraid to die.  
 Better is the swift and glorious flame that mounting dies of power,  
 Not to smoke in squalid blackness, hour on wretched futile hour.

Out to battle, do thy man's work, falter not in high attempt;  
 So a man is quit before his God and saved from self-contempt.  
 For the great heart grieves not though he lose the glorious crown  
of strife,

But he does the work before him, holding cheap his body's life.  
 Show thy prowess, be the hero thou wast born, with flashing glaive  
 Hew thy way with God before thee to the heaven of the brave.  
 All the wells that thou hast dug, the beasts that thou hast  
offered, all

Fame is gone to wrack; thy roots of pleasure cut, the tree must  
fall.

Eunuch, wherefore dost thou live? if thou must sink, with thy  
last breath

Seize thy foeman by the thigh and drag him with thee down to  
death.

Though his roots be cut, the strong man stands up stiff, he sinks  
not prone.

Mark the warhorse in the battle with the sunken car o'erthrown,  
 Up he struggles, full of pride and rage. Thou too like him exalt  
 Thy low fortunes, lift thy great house shamed and ruined through  
thy fault.

He whose perfect deeds as of a demigod in strength and mind  
 Make not up the daily talk and glory of amazed mankind,  
 What is he but one more clod to feed the fire and help the soil?  
 He is neither man nor woman. Man is he whose fire and toil,  
 Turned to wealth or turned to wisdom, truth or piety of soul,  
 Travel through the spacious world renowned from pole to ringing  
pole,

Or in austere works or knowledge or in valour quick and high  
 He outdoes his fellow-creatures scaling the immortals' sky.  
 Be not as the vagrant beggar seeking food from door to door,  
 Shameless with his skull and rosary wretched handfuls to  
implore.



Cowardly, ignoble and unfeeling is the life they lead,  
Equal to the houseless street-dog whom compassionate hands  
must feed.

Let not ever son of mine be such an one as all men scorn,  
Without throne and without purple, weak, emaciate and forlorn,  
Mean and with mean things content and vaunting o'er a little  
gain.

Such an one his foes delight in, but his friends are joyless men.  
We shall perish, exiles from our country, plagued with wretched  
want.

All obscure who were so glorious, doomed to petty things and  
scant,

Wandering in loveless places, dreaming at an alien door  
Of delightful things and pleasant in our joyous lives of yore.  
Death and shame in thee I bore and fondly deemed I had a son.  
Better were a woman barren than to bear with labour one  
Sluggish, weak and hopeless, without noble wrath and warlike  
fire.

Sunjoy, Sunjoy, waste not thou thy flame in smoke! Impetuous,  
dire,

Leap upon thy foes for havoc as a famished lion leaps,  
Storming through thy vanquished victors till thou fall on  
slaughtered heaps.

This is manhood to refuse defeat and insult not to bear.  
He who suffers and forgives, who bows his neck the yoke to wear,  
Is too weak for man, too base to be a woman. Loiterings  
Clog a mounting fortune, low contentment fetters, fear un wings,  
And a fainting over-pitiful heart she scorns for her abode.  
In thy strength reject these poisons, tread not vile subjection's  
road.

Make thy man's heart hard like iron to pursue and take thy own.  
Out to battle! let not woman's weakness shame thy manhood, son.  
Fortune dogs the hero's goings who like Ocean in his pride  
Walks through life with puissant footsteps as a lion the hill-side.

Even when he has gone where fate shall lead him, still his people  
 climb  
 On the wave of his great actions to a joy and strength sublime.  
 For a King must exile pleasure, turn from safety to waylay  
 Fortune for his nation like a hunter tracking down his prey.  
 Wise and fortunate ministers shall help him, thousands share  
 his joy."

But to Vidula, amazed and angry answered swift the boy.  
 "Where shall be thy bliss, my mother, though the whole wide  
 earth were thine,  
 If thine eyes of me are vacant? the delight of raiment fine,  
 Food and gems and rich enjoyments, what were these without  
 thy son?"

But the mother in her surge of passion answered rushing on.  
 "Be that Hell my foeman's where the loiterer and the coward  
 climb,  
 Who avoid occasion, murmuring, 'Why today? 'tis not the time.'  
 May my friends go flocking to that world where the high-crested  
 go,  
 Who respect the self within them and its noble value know.  
 But who, stripped of mastery, eat the bitter bread that others give,  
 Miserable souls and strengthless, is it life that such men live?  
 Live not with such abject living, be a prince and chief of men.  
 Let the Brahmins look toward thee even as to the King of Rain  
 All this world of creatures turns for sustenance with expectant  
 eyes.  
 Mighty Gods to mightier Indra from their golden thrones arise.  
 Lo, his hands to whom all creatures for their bliss come crowding  
 fast,  
 As to a ripe-fruited tree the birds innumerable haste,

And his life indeed is counted, for he reaps the earth with deeds  
And on friend and fere and kinsman showers unasked their  
princely needs,—  
Living by his arm's strength, taking only what his hand has won,  
Gathering here an earthly glory, shining there like Indra's sun.

## II

“ Evil is thy state, O Sunjoy; lose the manhood from thy soul  
And thou treadst the path of vilest spirits with their Hell for goal.  
Shall a warrior born of warriors to whom Heaven gave fire divine,  
Spend it not in mighty actions lavish of the God within?  
Shall he hug his life for ever? He is then a thief to Heaven;  
For to swell the days of earth with glorious deeds that strength  
was given.

Hear me, Sunjoy! Sindhu's monarch rules in might the  
conquered folk,  
But their hearts bend not before him, they abhor the foreign yoke.  
They from weakness sit with minds bewildered, full of hate and  
grief.

Waiting sullenly a sea of miseries, hopeless of relief.  
Gather faithful friends and get thee valiant helpers; through our  
lands  
Working with a fierce persistence, strengthening still thy mighty  
hands.

Others when they see thy daring shall be stirred to noble strife,  
Catch thy fire and rise in strong rebellion, scorning goods and  
life.

Make with these a close and mighty following, seek the pathless hills.

Region difficult and strong and sullen passes walled with ill  
For the rash invader; there in arms expect the tyrant's hour;  
He is not a god to be immortal, not for ever lasts his power.

Knowst thou not the ancient Brahmin with his deep and inward  
eye

That beholds the ages, told of thee that lowly thou shouldst lie,  
Yet again arise and prosper? Victor\* named, a victor be.  
Therefore have I chidden and urged thee, to awake thy destiny.  
O my son, believe me, he whose victory brings the common gain  
And a nation conquers with him, cannot fail; his goal is plain  
And his feet divinely guided, for his steps to Fate belong.  
O my son, think this whilst thou art fighting: 'Generations long  
Of my fathers walk beside me and a nation's mighty dead  
Watch me; for my greatness is their own, my slavery bows their  
head.'

In this knowledge turn thy thoughts to battle; Sunjoy, draw not  
back!

Eviller plight is not nor sinfuller, this day's bread to lack  
Nor to know from whence shall come the bitter morrow's  
scanty meal.

It is worse than death of spouse or child such indigence to feel.  
That's a grief that strikes and passes, this a long and living  
death.

In a house of mighty monarchs I derived my earliest breath;  
As from ocean into ocean sails a ship in bannered pride,  
To a house of mighty monarchs came I in my marriage-tide,  
Queen and Empress, filled with joys and blessings, worshipped by  
my lord,  
And my kin rejoiced to see me rich in wealth and jewelled hoard,  
Clothed in smooth and splendid raiment, girt with friends and  
nobly stored.

When thou seest me weak and abject and the weeping of thy wife,  
Wilt thou in thy breath take pleasure, wilt thou love thy shameful  
life?

\* "Sunjoy," Sanskrit *Saṁjaya*, means "Victory."

Wouldst thou see thy household priests and holy teachers leave  
our side,  
Our retainers hopeless of their sustenance who had served thy  
pride?

In thy proud aspiring actions, son, I lived; if these are past,  
Peace can dwell not in my bosom and my heart shall break at last.  
Must I then turn back the Brahmin when he sues for gold or  
lands?

Shame would tear my heart-strings; never, Sunjoy, went with  
From thy father's seat or from thy mother's presence suppliant  
men.

We were ever all men's refuge; shall we sue to others then?  
Life shall leave me rather, I will seek that house of nether calms.  
Never will I tread a stranger's floor and live upon his insolent  
alms.

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Lo! we toss in shoreless waters, be the haven to our sail!  
Lo! we drown in monstrous billows, be our boat with kindly hail!  
Save our hopeless fortunes! We are dead men drawing empty  
breath.

Be a hero and deliverer, raise us from this living death.  
Dare to die, O hero! Where is then the foeman half so strong  
As to overcome thy onset? Who would choose to suffer long  
Years of sad despondent weakness? sudden death is better far.  
Single out their mightiest, let thy fame o'ertop the surge of war.  
Indra by the death of Vritra seized the monarchy of Heaven;  
Lord of teeming worlds, to him the largest sovereign part is given.  
Calling to his armoured foes defiance, lo, the hero proud  
Shouts his name across the roar of battle like a lion loud  
And he breaks their foremost, and they fall apart like scattered  
spray,  
Till he slays their leader and mightiest winning glory wide as  
day.

Then his haters' hearts are troubled, then they bow reluctant  
heads.

For he hurls his life into the battle and on death he treads  
Towards victory; all the cowards and the tremblers of the earth  
Come with gifts and incense crowding to provide his ease and  
mirth.

Is it death thou fleest from? Sunjoy, savage is the fall of Kings,  
For a wise foe leaves no remnants, hands to stab or fugitive wings.  
To be King is heaven, O Sunjoy, sweet as nectar to the lip  
Power is to the mighty. Son of Kings, thou holdest in thy grip  
Heaven or empire; rush then like a meteor on the vaunting foe!  
Reaper in the battle! kinglike lay their armed thousands low.  
Sunjoy, terror of thy foemen, let me see not in thy close  
A poor crouching coward girt with weeping friends and shouting  
foes.

Vail not thou thy crest to be a mock for Sindhu's laughing girls:  
Take her highborn damsels for thy handmaids, with her  
conquered pearls  
Wreath thy queen, be strong and splendid as of yore in youthful  
pride.

Young and shaped to princely beauty, cultured, to great Kings  
allied,  
Such a man as thou to deviate from thy bold and radiant mood!  
Thou to bow thy neck to other yoke than Earth's, for alien food  
Speaking sweet to strangers, following with a meek inclinèd  
head!

If I see thee thus degraded, I shall think my son is dead.  
But I know this country's mighty princes and their lordly race  
Firmer-rooted than the mountains in eternal kingliness.  
In our fathers and forefathers 'twas the same and in our sons  
Shall be and their progeny for ever while the Ganges runs.  
It was made by God a grandeur! Never prince of the ancient

seed,  
Never prince who did the deeds of princehood in this land was  
bred,

Who would crouch and gaze for sustenance, who in fear would  
bow his neck.  
Like a giant tree he has no joints to bend with, though he break;  
Break he may, but bends not. If he bows, to holy men in awe  
Bows he; if he yields, it is to justice and religion's law,  
Not to equal or inferiors: them he holds with sternest hand,  
Smiting still the strong ill-doer and the troublers of the land,  
Mightily like a maddened elephant through the world he storms  
abroad  
Conquering fate through high adventure, kneeling not to bear  
the load—  
Little recks if he has helpers or stands lonely, dispossessed;  
He is what he is and will not alter, lowers not his crest."

### III

“Mother, mother stony-natured, ore of pitiless iron black  
Heaven collected and together forged thy dreadful heart to make.  
Mother mine heroic-minded, high-disdaining common mould,  
Dreadful is the warrior code of ethics that our princes hold,  
Harsh, devoid of love and sweetness; thou my mother driv’st me on  
To the battle like a stranger, like another woman’s son!  
Am I not thy child? has any other in thy love a part?  
Yet thy words are harsh and ruthless. Will it please thy fiery  
heart  
If I lie in battle cold and in my stead thou own the earth?  
What were all life’s splendour, what were bright and fair things  
worth?  
When thine eyes seek me in vain, will these things soothe their  
sad desire?”

But the mother answered still with words that breathed her  
soul of fire.

“ Dear my son, for joy or sorrow twofold is the great life’s scope,  
To be righteous in our actions, to fulfil each human hope.  
Private welfare, high religion, both alike should urge thee on.  
It has come at last, the mightiest hour of all thy life, O son.  
Now if thou shouldst spurn occasion from vile fear or pitifulness,  
All thy beauty were dishonoured and thy strength grows thy  
disgrace.

When dishonour stains thee, should I shape my words to soothe  
thy mind?

Like a she-mule’s were my mother’s love, a brutish impulse blind.  
Leave the path of fools and cowards, vileness hated by the wise.  
Strange the sorcery of affection sealing up this people’s eyes!  
But not mine! While only thou art noble, art thou dear and loved.  
But a graceless son or grandchild by aspiring thoughts unmoved,  
Crude and brutish-brained with unformed soul, revolts a father’s  
mind,

Knowing he had all in vain his labour to create his kind.  
Shrink not from a noble action, stoop not to unworthy deed!  
Vile are they who stoop, they gain not Heaven’s doors, nor here  
succeed.

Kshatriyas on this world were loosed for battle by their Maker  
high,

Sunjoy, for the strife and victory, and they conquer or they die.  
Ever by their doom of Nature to a labour unrevoked  
And a fierce hard-hearted action for the people’s safety yoked,  
Conquering or dying, glorious Indra’s radiant world they share:  
Yet his heavenly mansions to a warrior’s heart are not so dear  
As to dare and triumph, as the gust and glory of the strife,  
As to set his foes beneath his feet and drink the joy of life.  
When the thinking soul of manhood is insulted and oppressed,  
Deep he burns with fire for ever and revenge is in his breast,



Till he's strong to hurl disfigured self away and nobly cease  
 Or to crush the proud wrongdoer; other way is none to peace.  
 Wilt thou faint for difficulty and sorrow? they but strengthen  
 men.

Even a little pleasure comes not here without a little pain,  
 Without struggle no delight is and without delight the soul  
 Cannot live, but ceases like the Ganges in the ocean's roll."

Then King Sunjoy answered, faintly now, but making once more  
 moan.

"Not such counsel thou shouldst give me. Mother, still I am thy  
 son.

Be as dumb men are, my mother, be as dull and joyless things;  
 Look to pity and softness only, not the iron moods of Kings."

"Greatest were my joy then if thy thoughts like mine grew  
 eagle-eyed.

Thou bidst me to woman's softness? I bid thee to masculine  
 pride.

When the men of Sindhu are not, blotted by thy hands from life,  
 When thou winnest difficult victory from the clutch of fearful  
 strife,

I shall know thou art my offspring and shall love my son indeed."

But King Sunjoy, "Where have I a single helper in my need?  
 All alone what man can struggle? Without means who groweth  
 great?

I have neither friends nor treasure; when I view my dreadful  
 state,  
 Fallen, helpless, wretched, all my sick heart turns from useless  
 toil

As a sinner lost despairs of heaven for a thing so vile.

But, O mother, if thy wisdom find an issue from this net,  
Tell me, mother; I may do thy lofty bidding even yet."

"Never scorn thyself for past defeat; be bold and proud of heart.  
Fortune goes and comes again; she seeks us only to depart.  
Foolish are those careful thinkers who would ponder all their  
days,  
Thinking this and that, and leap not to their crown, ask perfect  
ways.

Where is in the world an action whose result is wholly sure?  
Here uncertainty's the one thing certain. To a noble lure  
Man puts forth his manhood, wins and is or dies in the attempt.  
They who act not, try not, they are nothing and their crown  
contempt

Single is inaction's nature to forego Fate's mighty call:  
Double-edged high aspiration wins life's throne or loses all.  
Knowing that his life is transient, sure of its uncertainties  
Swift the hero clashing with adversity jostles for increase.  
All you who are men, awake and rise and struggle; free and great  
Now resolve to be and shrink not from the dangerous face of Fate.  
Be you resolute for victory; this shall drag her to your side,  
For the iron will takes Fortune captive like a vanquished bride.  
Call the gods to bless thy purpose; set the Brahmin's subtle brain  
And the nation's princes in thy vanguard; fight! thou shalt  
attain.

There are angered bold ambitious natures, many a breast  
Arrogant and active, there are men insulted and disgraced  
By the foreign tyrant, there are soaring spirits that aspire,  
Minds of calm courageous wisdom, quiet strengths and souls of  
fire,  
Desperate men with broken fortunes; link thyself to these and  
dare.

Care not for his giant armies, care not for his tools of war.

With these native flames to help thee, those shall break like piles  
of cloud  
When a mighty storm awakes in heaven and the winds grow loud.  
Give them precedence, rise to yield them courtesy, speak them  
ever fair:  
They shall make thee then their leader and for thee shall do and  
dare.  
When the tyrant sees his conquered foeman careless grown of  
death,  
Bent on desperate battle, he will tremble, he will hold his breath  
Like a man who sees a Python lashing forward for the grip.  
Doubtless he will strive to soothe or tame thee, but if thou escape  
His deceit and violence, he will parley, give and take for peace.  
So at least there's gained a respite and good terms for thy  
increase.  
Respite and a footing gained, then gather wealth to swell thy  
force.  
Friends and helpers crowd around him who has money and  
resource,  
But the poor man they abandon and they shun his feeble state,  
Losing confidence, saying, "Where are then his means and  
favouring fate?"  
When thy foe shall grow thy helper, sessions new and treaties  
make,  
Then thou'lt understand how easy 'twas to win thy kingdom back.

## IV

“ Never should a prince and leader bow his haughty head to fear,  
Let his fortune be however desperate, death however near.  
If his soul grow faint, let him imprison weakness in his heart,  
Keep a bold and open countenance and play on a hero's part.  
If the leader fear and faint, then all behind him faint and fear.  
So a king of men should keep a dauntless look and forehead clear.



“ O thou strong and resolute speaker, even the feeblest fainting  
soul  
Would put darkness from him, listening, for thy words would  
make him whole.  
I will high uphold my country in its swift precipitous fate,  
Having thee to lead me on whose vision past and future wait.  
My denial and my silence were but craft; consent deferred  
Drew thee on to speak lest I should lose even one inspiring word.  
It is sudden nectar to the desolate to find a friend!  
Now I rise to smite the foe and cease not till I make an end.”  
On he rushed to desperate battle burning in his pride and might,  
As a noble warhorse wounded rushes faster to the fight.  
Stung with arrows of her speech he did his mother’s high  
command  
Driving out the foe and stranger, freeing all the conquered land.

Lo, this strong and famous poem that shall make men gods for  
might,  
Kindling fiery joy of battle. When a King has lost the fight  
By his foemen whelmed and broken, let his well-wishers and  
friends  
Read to him this poem. All who need high strength for noble  
ends,  
Let them read it daily; for the warrior hearing turns to flame,  
Tramples down a hundred foemen and acquires a deathless name.  
And the pregnant woman who shall hear it day by day  
Bears a hero or a strong man dowered with strength to help or  
slay,  
Or a soul of grandiose virtues, or a helper of the Light,  
Or a glorious giver blazing with the spirit's radiance bright.  
But a daughter of high princes and a fighter's wife shall bear  
Splendid like a flame and swift and fortunate, strong to dare,  
Unapproachable in battle and invincible in war,  
Armèd champion of the right, injustice' scourge, some human star.

# **SONGS OF THE SEA**



## Songs of the Sea

### I

O thou unhopèd-for elusive wonder of the skies,  
Stand still one moment! I will lead thee and bind  
With music to the chambers of my mind.  
Behold how calm today this sea before me lies  
And quivering with what tremulous heart of dreams  
In the pale glimmer of the faint moonbeams.  
If thou at last art come indeed, O mystery, stay  
Woven by song into my heart-beats from this day.

Stand, goddess, yet! Into this anthem of the seas  
With the pure strain of my full voiceless heart  
Some rhythm of the rhythmless, some part  
Of thee I would weave today, with living harmonies  
Peopling the solitude I am within.  
Wilt thou not here abide on that vast scene,  
Thou whose vague raiment edged with dream haunts us and flees,  
Fulfilled in an eternal quiet like this sea's?



## II

I lean to thee a listening ear  
And thy immense refrain I hear,  
O Ocean circled with the lights of morn.  
What word is it thou sing'st? what tune  
My heart is filled with, and it soon  
Must overflow? What mystical unborn  
Spirit is singing in thy white foam-caves?  
What voice turns heaven to music from thy waves?

## III

Long gazing on this dawn and restless sea,  
My heart is moved with a strange minstrelsy.  
Tranquil and full and slow that music's sound  
Or a chant pitiful, tender and profound.  
At times its passing fills my heart with tears.  
Maddened it runs and maddening him who hears.  
What spirit lives and laughs and weeps in thee?  
What thought is here that cries eternally?  
I know not, but a trembling sweet and strong  
Has taken my every limb touched by thy song,  
O infinite Voice, O Soul that callst to me,  
As I look on this luminous dawn and on the sea!

## IV

The flute of dawn has rung out on the sea,  
And in a holiday of festal glee  
The radiant sunbeams dally and happily stream:  
How on thy body they wallow, laugh and gleam!  
Flowers blown in song on a bright welter cast!  
The riches of sunlight quiver along thy vast  
Sweet tumult, kindle the world thy chantings hold,  
Or, rocking, for thy feet are chains of gold.  
Now has thy cry become a bird of sound,  
And on the wings, the throbbing breast around  
A dream of gold is smeared; in my heart's skies  
The beautiful vagrant making springtide flies.  
There wings the floating mighty creature, joys  
Threading and lights, a glory and a voice.

## V

Upon what bosom shall I lay my bliss  
Or whom enrich with all my welling tears,  
The unguessed joy, the grief that nameless is  
And will not be denied? All checks they pierce.  
The riches of my bliss have broken in bloom,  
And all my sorrow seeks melodious room.  
How have they made of all my secret hours  
A kingdom of strange singing in groves of flowers!  
A mystic wind, a nameless trouble keeps  
My spirit. All the load of my heart's deeps  
Where shall I rest, moved to thy passionate play,  
O Ocean, upon this thy festal day?

## VI

Dawn has become to me a golden fold  
Of shining dreams, hearing thy potent cry.  
A marvel chant on every wave is rolled,  
And sky and wind repeat one melody.  
What hast thou done? My mind has grown a lyre  
Whose many hundred strings thy tones inspire;  
Thy touch, thy hand have made it eternally  
A refrain of thy pride and majesty.

## VII

Behold, the perfect-gloried dawn has come  
Far-floating from eternity her home.  
Her limbs are clad in silver light of dreams,  
Her brilliant influence on the water streams,  
And in that argent flood to one white theme  
Are gathering all the hues and threads of dream.  
Tricked with her fire the heavens richly fill;  
To an eternal chant the winds are still;  
And all thy bosom's deep unquiet taken  
Thou hast wrung out and into melody shaken,  
And all the sounds that stirred the earth so long  
Are called into a wordless trance of song.  
O minstrel of infinity! What world  
Soundless has known that music? What ether curled  
In voiceless sleep? Where are those notes withdrawn?  
Into the hush of what eternal dawn?

## VIII

I have no art of speech, no charm of song,  
 Rhythm nor measure nor the lyric pace.  
 No words alluring to my skill belong.  
 Now in me thought's free termless heavens efface  
 Limit and mark; upon my spirit is thrown  
 The shadow of infinity alone.

I at thy voice in brilliant dawn or eve  
 Have felt strange formless words within my mind.  
 Then my heart's doors wide to thy cry I leave  
 And in thy chant I seek myself and find.  
 Now some few hymns of that dim union sweet  
 Have filled my soul. I bring them to thy feet.

## IX

All day within me only one music rings.  
 I have become a lyre of helpless strings,  
 And I am but a horn for thee to wind,  
 O vast musician! Take me, all thy mind  
 In light, in gloom, by day, by night express.  
 Into me, minstrel, breathe thy mightiness.  
 On solitary shores, in lonely skies,  
 In night's huge sieges when the winds blow wild,  
 In many a lovely land of mysteries,  
 In many a shadowy realm, or where a child,  
 Dawn, bright and young, sweet unripe thoughts conceives,  
 Or through the indifferent calm desireless eves,  
 In magic night and magic light of thee,  
 Play on thy instrument, O Soul, O Sea.

X

What is this play thou playest with my life?  
How hast thou parted lids mind held so stiff  
Against the vision, that like a bud shut long  
My mind has opened only to thy song,  
And all my life lies like a yearning flower  
Hued, perfumed, quivering in thy murmurous power,  
And all my days are grown an infinite strain  
Of music sung by thee, O shoreless main?

XI

My heart wings restless with this music's pain,  
Bird of some wonderful harmonious reign:  
No time, no place it meets, touches no end,  
But rests and flies in melody contained.  
Song's boundless regions have no isle preferred,  
Its depths no plummet moment yet has found.  
Memories and strange deep silences are heard  
Here in thy solitude of shoreless sound.  
Thou melody fathomless! O sea where floats  
Song timeless! What were these immortal notes  
To which my heart could silently disclose  
The hidden petals of the eternal rose?

## XII

O painter, thou thy marvellous art didst use  
In green and pearl and blue and countless hues  
To make this pattern of myriad flowers untold,  
Passions of azure, miracles of gold.  
My eyes had hunger for form's mysteries  
And wandered in vision upon colour's seas.  
Paint out these hues! draw darkness like a brush  
Over these tired eyelids! blind me, hush!  
Ah, not for visible delight I long!  
My soul enchanted only by thy song  
I will swim out upon thy waves of sound,  
O Voice, and sink into thee for ever drowned.  
Then shall I pass into thy hymn, O sea.  
There shall be nothing else to eternity.  
The universe shall but to sound belong,  
And Time and Space shall tremble into song.

### XIII

O now today like a too brilliant dream

What is this that thy floating heart reveals  
In the full moon's intense wide-flowing beam?

What infinite peace from thy calm moonlight steals  
Waking my breast to this unchecked delight?  
What melody moves thee in the luminous night?

What shadow of a dream from lives long past

Returns into thy ancient heart, O sea?  
What bygone virtue comes fulfilled at last?

What dead illusion paints this dream on thee?  
A hundred glimmering memories break like flowers  
On waves of moonlight in my life's still hours.

It seems as if a hundred lives' joy, fears  
And burden of their laughter and their tears  
Today came round me and incessantly  
Sang to my soul their anthem in this sea.  
A million lives today have met in one  
And float on dream a single flower alone.

## XIV

The day is filled with clouds and dusk and grey.  
 Wave sobbing falls on wave; there flowers, there rocks  
 A pain unquiet in their broken shocks.  
 Trembling there moans a large lament today.  
 The heavens are filled with dusk and sad and grey.

An endless outcry fills my soul today.  
 Is't joy? is't pain? Are these the depths of love!  
 Troubled, restless, peering with wild crests above,  
 What is it cries, what yearns in thee this day,  
 O heart? Thy heavens are full of dusk and grey.

## XV

Today the heavens are sealed with clouds and blind,  
 A leaping madman comes the pathless wind,  
 The rains of deluge flee, a storm-tossed shade,  
 Over thy breast of gloom. Loud and dismayed  
 Thy lost enormous chant rolls purposeless  
 Seeking its end in an unregioned space.  
 O come, thou great mad sea, O surging come!  
 My breast defenceless mates thy dolorous foam.  
 Darkness the heavens, the wind doom's signal breath,  
 I shall float on through thee or sink in death.



## XVI

This is not now the lyre's melodious stream,  
 These are not now the blossoming groves of dream,  
 But Rudra's torrent comes with pitiless play:  
 The world sinks down as on its last wild day.  
 The fathomless depths leap up to mix the sky;  
 Winds of destruction's sport walk tenebrously.  
 Masses of driving death go chanting by,  
 The dreadful laughers of eternity.  
 No lightning cleaves the night thy thunders fill;  
 Thy wounded bosom pours out clamour and wail;  
 The myriad serpents of infinitude  
 Their countless hoods above thy waves extrude.  
 I hear mid the loud stormwinds and the night  
 A voice arise of terror infinite;  
 Death's shoutings in a darkness without shore  
 Join like a million Titans' hungry roar.

## XVII

When thy enormous wind has filled my breast,  
 Torn sail and broken rudder shall have rest.  
 My soul shall refugeless, a sinking boat,  
 Go down in thy fierce seas nor wish to float.  
 I under thy brow of great destruction's frown  
 In the eternal darkness shall lie down  
 Upon that other coast remote and dumb.  
 Though in the image of death today thou come,  
 My heart keeps open for thee thy house, this breast.  
 O king, O sea, enter and dwell and rest.

## XVIII

O high stark Death, ascetic proud and free,  
Draw back thy trident of eternity:  
Leave, leave my days their natural life and death  
Reclined in the heart's grove, lulled with music's breath.  
The lotus of creation, like a rhyme  
Trembling with its own joy and sorrow, long  
On the harmonious ocean of old Time  
Has floated, heaven above the infinite song.  
O great last death of all, leave yet to stay  
Or pass, to fade or bloom my little day.

## XIX

O loud blind conqueror, stay thy furious car,  
Lay down thy arrow. Evening from afar  
Comes pacing with her smooth and noiseless step  
And dusk pale light of quiet in heavens of sleep.  
Stay then thy chariot, rest! O tired with strife!  
O wearied soul of death! conqueror of life!  
Vain was thy war, O Lord, my soul to win;  
Myself was giving myself without that pain.  
Now I will light the evening lamps for thee,  
My soul with vesper hymns thy fane shall be,  
And I will spread a cool couch for thy sleep  
And at thy feet calm's holy water keep.  
What need, to conquer me, hadst thou to strive,  
Who only longed unasked myself to give?

## XX

Thou hast come back, O Lord! this soul, thy sky,  
Looks glad on flowers and fruits and ecstasy:  
Ceased has thy song of death, thy call of pain,  
Life settles on thy lips and lids again.  
Once more I look upon thy joyous dawn  
And the links of rapture twixt our hearts are drawn.  
My heart leans out to hear thy song. Ah, when  
Thy voice calls, all its buds shall open then,  
While mid the touch of breezes wrapped in flowers  
Cry under lyric heavens the harmonious hours.

## XXI

The light of the young dawn round every limb  
Sweeps over thee as golden billows may;  
Out every moment glimmers some new dream.  
Thou in a swing of gold hast sat at play.  
Like a great king thou robest thyself, O sea,  
And pour'st thy love in waves of precious gold,  
Like a young royal lover lavishly  
Chasing my heart with wealth through every fold.  
And I to thee a youthful soul have brought  
Full of the dawn to lay it at thy feet.  
A wreath of lilies gold my hands have wrought,  
For thy rich golden neck a carcanet.  
We two together bound shall lie and gleam  
Golden with dawn in solitudes of dream.

## XXII

O today in heaven there rings high a mournful strain,  
 Till our empty hearts beat slow and of ending fain.  
 Mournful moans the cloud, mournfully and loud  
     Kissing ocean, roaming heaven in vain  
         Hear the winds complain!

And today with lost desire  
 Sobs my spirit like a lyre  
     Wakened to complain.  
 For it seeks a want it cannot name,  
 Aching with a viewless flame  
 Knows not how to rest nor where to flee,  
     Only wailing knows and pain.  
 Towards the clouds it soars up fitfully,  
 Lured it knows not where nor why:  
     Singing only from the soul  
         Songs of bitter dole!  
 Neither rhythm keeps nor cry  
 Of saving measure, fitfully  
     Wailing out its shapeless pain.  
 They have filled the heavens and filled my soul,  
 Songs of weeping wild and bitter dole,  
     Chants of utter pain.

### XXIII

Sleep, sleep through clouded moons, O sea, at last  
Under a lonely sky; the eyelids close  
Wearied of song. Held are the regions fast;  
Mute in the hushed and luminous world repose.

I sit upon thy hither shore, O main,  
My gaze is on thy face. Yet sleep, O sleep!  
My heart is trembling with a soundless strain,  
My soul is watching by thy slumber deep.

When shall I know thee who thou art, O friend?  
When wilt thou wake? with what grand pæan vast?  
Lo, I will wait for thee. Thou at the end  
Stretch out thy arms in some dim eve at last.

### XXIV

Where have I seen thee? where have clasped thy hand?  
When gazed into thy eyes? what distant time  
Saw our first converse? what forgotten land?  
Sangst thou? or was thy laughter heard sublime?

Then was the soul so full of deepest pains?  
Were then the eyes so ready with their tears?  
Such thoughts, such griefs, so many sobbing strains  
Played on our soul-strings in those distant years?

Then didst thou take me to thy bosom wide  
 Like a kind friend with close-encircling arm?  
 Did all my thoughts into thy nature glide  
 Led out by love as with a whispered charm?

All I remember not, but this alone,  
 My heart joined thine in some past age or clime;  
 Because thy touch has never from me gone,  
 I float to thee across eternal Time.

I think, in a strange secret trysting-place  
 We too shall meet at last and recognise,  
 Where day weds night in some enchanted space,  
 All the old love awakening in our eyes.

## XXV

None is awake in all the world but I;  
 While the sun hesitated, I upstood  
 And met thee in a grandiose secrecy  
 To lave my soul in thy majestic flood.

Be outward songs the outward nature's part!  
 These are for all and all their tones may hear.  
 There is a strain that fills the secret heart:  
 Reveal that music to my listening ear.

Therefore, O sea, O friend, I came alone,  
 That I might hear that rapture or that moan.

## XXVI

The sun has not yet risen. Luring night  
Shelters thee still as with a robe of love.  
Calm are thy lips, thy eyes have tranquil light.  
Whether thou sleep or dream or wake or move.

In the last trance of darkness visible  
How beautiful and calm thy gaze, O sea!  
My speech, my song have suddenly grown still  
In this enamoured twilight's ecstasy.

Am I not as thy brother younger born?  
Then sometimes turn a loving gaze, O sea.  
The song that shakes thy bosom night and morn  
Bid echo sometimes, Ocean, even in me.

## XXVII

The sunbeams fall and kiss thy lips and gleam  
Calm and profound like thy own majesty.  
How all my million golden flowers of dream  
Out of my soul thou hast drawn utterly,  
And these thou wearest as a garland now;  
I stand with empty hands upon thy shore.  
Sing me one chant of thine! 'Ah, let it flow  
An endless nectar and my soul explore  
With echoes and with lights, and turn thy gaze  
For ever and for ever on my days,  
And from today, O Ocean without strand,  
Thy song I'll sing, wandering from land to land.

## XXVIII

Nay, nay, let be! O not today that sound  
Before these multitudes, but what all can hear!  
These robed for joy have come thy margin round;  
Draw close their hearts to thine, give dance and cheer.

But when the midnight broods on thee again,  
These happy laughers sunk upon thy swell,  
The world shall close in song about us twain  
And darkness shall stand there as sentinel.

Thou shalt sing out one chant, a different song  
From me return; we shall together lie  
In infinite gladness while ambrosial, long,  
Thy thunders drown me in their harmony.

When thickest night shall hold again thy shore,  
We two shall meet in song and join once more.



XXIX

How many æons hast thou flowed like this,  
The torture of this music in thy heart?  
World-maddening melodies that stormed heart to kiss  
After what cycles from thy surge still part,  
Recalling endless ages,  
Regretting countless lives?

Birthless and endless, bearing from the first  
Eternal wailing thou sweep'st on, O sea.  
What hunger sobs in thee? what vehement thirst?  
What tireless anguish moans implacably?  
Moans many a thousand ages,  
Moans many a million lives.

O friend cursed thus through the unending years!  
O my unquiet ocean all of tears!  
Yet 'tis to thee that leaving all I come,  
As always came I to my real home  
And always shall come in the endless years,  
Parted through endless ages,  
Met in unnumbered lives.

## XXX

What years, what clime, what dim and distant shore  
Beheld our meeting first? What thundrous roar  
Or low sweet plaint of music first had bound  
In what eternal seats of what vast sound?  
What heart of mighty singing devious-souled,  
What mystery of beaten time controlled?  
The spirit of what nameless tune could bring  
Our births to oneness from their wandering?  
From some huge soul's beginningless infinity  
Our waters side by side began their course, O sea.  
How often our lives have parted been since then!  
How often have our two hearts met again!  
Thou float'st, O friend, for ever to that Vast;  
I float on thy chant only to the last.

XXXI

My sleepless midnight thou hast filled indeed  
    With seas of song, O King of minstrelsy.  
What pomps of sound through the thick night proceed!  
    What surf, what surge of thunders rolls over me!  
My eyes, my face are covered with thee, O main,  
My heart sunk down beneath thy echo-plain.  
My soul like a flower offered to the storm  
Trembles. What wild great song without a form  
Burdened with all the joys a heart can feel,  
Torn with all agonies no joy can heal,  
Rolls through this darkness? Nothing do I see,  
Only a rumour and infinity  
I feel upon my bosom lay its weight,  
A clamouring vague vastness increate.  
A hundred strains left voiceless to the ear,  
A thousand silences of song I hear.  
Of universal sound the wordless tongue  
That in each voice and cry is hidden deep,  
The heart unsung of all songs ever sung  
Comes to me through the veils of death and sleep.

## XXXII

Lighting small lamps and in a little room  
 I played and poorly hummed a trivial theme;  
 With the lamp's rays on my soul's half-lit gloom  
 I traced the image of a bounded dream.  
 Thee I had quite forgotten, Ocean vast:  
 Well did my dream-bound little play-room please,  
 An idly-plaited wreath before me placed,  
 Holding my petty lamp, content, at ease.  
 Then with thy solemn thunders didst thou call  
 Chanting eternity in thy deep strain;  
 Thy huge rebuke shook all my nature, all  
 The narrow coasts of thought sank crumbling in.  
 Collapsed that play-room and that lamp was quenched.  
 I stood in Ocean's thunders washed and drenched.

## XXXIII

Evening has not descended yet, fast sets the sun;  
 Darkness and light together seize on thee as one.  
 Gazing upon thy luminous dusk the clouds float by,  
 The charmed wind o'er thy troubled lights sings murmuringly.  
 Upon this undark darkness and enchanted light  
 Heaven wondering gazes down, a silence infinite.  
 O Ocean, travelling what uncertain shadowy reign  
 Sing'st thou a song of sadness and a hampered strain?  
 To what vast problem hast thou found no answer yet?  
 With what sad doubt are thy steps burdened, pilgrim great?  
 With life and death what converse dost thou hold today?  
 What lyre has broken in thy hands? what pains dismay?  
 All darkness earth endures, all light that reaches life  
 Pour on my being, Ocean, from thy soul's huge strife.  
 My soul too grows a trembling shadow mid these shades.  
 What hope is here or truth? What fear? What lie invades?

## XXXIV

In this hushed evening on thy billows grey  
 Where swells thy chant or whither flows today?  
 To what far dimness is revealed thy cry?  
 Thou for my soul prepar'st what ministry?  
 The conch-shell's sound for vesper worship blown  
 Is now within my heart thy evening tone;  
 With frankincense as at a holy tide  
 Like a dim temple I am purified.  
 Deep-souled and saved from passion and desire,  
 To whom then does thy solemn song aspire,  
 Vast worshipper? whose rites dost thou prepare?  
 Towards whom hold'st thou my soul, a lamp of prayer?  
 What rhythmic hymn of power dost thou repeat?  
 Initiate me, Ocean calm, complete  
 My heart of worship with thy mystic word:  
 Let all my soul with one wide prayer be stirred.

## XXXV

Evening has fallen upon the world; its fitting tone,  
 O sea, thy quiet bosom gives, making dim moan,  
 And that wide solemn murmur, passion's ceasing flow,  
 Becomes a chant of silence for our souls their depths to know.  
 Thy garrulous waves have sunk to sleep upon thy breast,  
 The unquiet winds have been persuaded now to rest,  
 In heaven there is no moon nor star: void ancient space  
 Settles on all things in its solemn measurelessness.  
 Is there no last desire left in thy mind today?  
 Is love then finished for thee? Has life done its play?  
 Therefore in this illusionless grey twilight lost  
 Thou plungest down into thyself, unmoved, untossed.  
 I too will veil myself within my being deep:  
 Thou when thy musing's done, call me out of my sleep.

## XX XVI

The great heavens have no voice, the world is lying still:  
Thou too hast spoken no word awhile, O illimitable.  
The evening rains down on thee its calm influences,  
Thou liest a motionless flood of purity and peace;  
Thy song fallen silent in the first pale cave of night,  
Keeps thy heart secret, murmuring with dumb joy of light.  
My petty house of pain and pleasure sinks unshaped  
In thy vast body by a tranced delight enwrapped:  
All Nature floats to thee like a lotus still and sweet,  
And Death and Time have paused arrested at thy feet.  
Some mighty Yogin keeps his posture on my breast,  
Collected, unbreathing, mute, with lids of moveless rest.  
The light of Him I have seen, Himself I reach not. O sea,  
Silent I'll wait; make me one formless soul with thee.

## XXXVII

O by long prayer, by hard attempt have bloomed two flowers,  
thy eyes!

Swimming with adoration they possess the skies,  
And from thy love-intoxicated hymns there start  
On tossing waves these new sonatas of the heart.  
Heaven falters with the frequent, deep and solemn sound,  
The world is gazing as when the great Dance went round.  
A horn is blown and cymbals clash upon the Void:  
So deep a tabor never to earth's music was allied.  
The free winged winds of dawn in their ecstatic dance  
Are circling round my soul and seek it with their hands,  
The cry of hymns of rapture in my soul's abode  
Has entered, flowers of longing bloom from me towards God.  
My heart is mad for God today. Though my heart's bliss  
Find or not find, sink down or float,—this, only this!  
O soul-fulfiller, O adorer, sing for ever  
New chants! live still for God-love and divine endeavour.

### XXXVIII

Here there is light,—is it darkness on thy farther shore?  
Thither my heart upon thy waters ferry o'er.  
    Something there rings from that far space;  
    I know not what its strains express,  
Whether 'tis light that sings or darkness cries upon thy shore.  
There will I go, my eyes shall see,  
    My soul shall hear unfalteringly  
Anthems of light or strains of darkness on that farther shore.  
    The songs of this side all are known,  
    My heart has cherished every tone;  
Of these I'll weave remembered garlands on thy far-off shore.  
Take me, O mighty sea, across thy long dividing roar.

### XXXIX

Burns on that other shore the mystic light  
That never was lit here by eve or dawn?  
Is't there, the song eternal, infinite,  
None ever heard from earthly instruments drawn?  
Sits there then any like myself who yearns  
Thirsting for unknown touches on the soul?  
Is't there, the heart's dream? unsurpassable burns  
Thy shadowy self we seek, there bright and whole?  
My thirst is great, O mighty One! deep, deep  
The thirst is in my heart unsatisfied.  
Ah, drown me in thy dumb unfathomed sleep  
Or carry to that ungrasped other side.  
Will not my hope's dream there be held at last?  
My barren soul grow kingly, rich and vast?

## XL

This shore and that shore,—I am tired, they pall.  
Where thou art shoreless, take me from it all.  
My spirit goes floating and can find oppressed  
In thy unbanked immensity only rest.  
Thick darkness falls upon my outer part,  
A lonely stillness grips the labouring heart,  
Dumb weeping with no tears to ease the eyes.  
I am mad for thee, O king of mysteries.  
Have I not sought thee on a million streams,  
And wheresoever the voice of music dreams,  
In wondrous lights and sealing shadows caught,  
And every night and every day have sought?  
Pilot eternal, friend unknown embraced,  
O, take me to thy shoreless self at last.





## **SIX POEMS**

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## The Bird of Fire

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went  
glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,  
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a  
soundless wayless burning sea.

Now in the eve of the waning world the colour and splendour re-  
turning drift through a blue-flicker air back to my breast,  
Flame and shimmer staining the rapture-white foam-vest of  
the waters of Eternity.

Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow  
have you come from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me  
Bringst thou for travailing earth a spirit silent and free or  
His crimson passion of love divine,—

White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats  
brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,  
Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time  
from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine?

White-rose-altar the eternal Silence built, make now my nature  
wide, an intimate guest of His solitude,  
But golden above it the body of One in Her diamond sphere  
with Her halo of star-bloom and passion-ray!  
Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing  
the hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,  
A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase  
of moon-edged night and rising day.

O Flame who art Time's last boon of the sacrifice, offering-flower  
held by the finite's gods to the Infinite,  
O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the un-  
barred lids that look beyond all space,  
One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind  
and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight;  
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire  
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.

## Trance

A naked and silver-pointed star  
Floating near the halo of the moon;  
A storm-rack, the pale sky's fringe and bar,  
Over waters stilling into swoon.

My mind is awake in stirless trance,  
Hushed my heart, a burden of delight;  
Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,  
Mute the body aureate with light.

O star of creation pure and free,  
Halo-moon of ecstasy unknown,  
Storm-breath of the soul-change yet to be,  
Ocean self enraptured and alone!

## Shiva

### *The Inconscient Creator*

A face on the cold dire mountain peaks  
 Grand and still; its lines white and austere  
 Match with the unmeasured snowy streaks  
 Cutting heaven, implacable and sheer.

Above it a mountain of matted hair  
 Æon-coiled on that deathless and lone head  
 In its solitude huge of lifeless air  
 Round, above illimitably spread.

A moon-ray on the forehead, blue and pale,  
 Stretched afar its finger of still light  
 Illumining emptiness. Stern and male  
 Mask of peace indifferent in might!

But out from some Infinite born now came  
 Over giant snows and the still face  
 A quiver and colour of crimson flame,  
 Fire-point in immensities of space.

Light-spear-tips revealed the mighty shape,  
 Tore the secret veil of the heart's hold;  
 In that diamond heart the fires undrape,  
 Living core, a brazier of gold.



This was the closed mute and burning source  
    Whence were formed the worlds and their star-dance;  
Life sprang a self-rapt unconscious Force,  
    Love, a blazing seed, from that flame-trance.

## The Life Heavens

A life of intensities wide, immune  
    Floats behind the earth and her life-fret,  
A magic of realms mastered by spell and rune,  
    Grandiose, blissful, coloured, increate.

A music there wanders mortal ear  
    Hears not, seizing, intimate, remote,  
Wide-winged in soul-spaces, fire-clear,  
    Heaping note on enrapturing new note.

Forms deathless there triumph, hues divine  
    Thrill with nets of glory the moved air;  
Each sense is an ecstasy, love the sign  
    Of one outblaze of godhead that two share.

The peace of the senses, the senses' stir  
    On one harp are joined mysteries; pain  
Transmuted is ravishment's minister,  
    A high note and a fiery refrain.

All things are a harmony faultless, pure;  
 Grief is not nor stain-wound of desire;  
 The heart-beats are a cadence bright and sure  
 Of Joy's quick steps, too invincible to tire.

A Will there, a Force, a magician Mind  
 Moves, and builds at once its delight-norms,  
 The marvels it seeks for surprised, outlined,  
 Hued, alive, a cosmos of fair forms,

Sounds, colours, joy-flamings. Life lies here  
 Dreaming, bound to the heavens of its goal,  
 In the clasp of a Power that enthrals to sheer  
 Bliss and beauty body and rapt soul.

My spirit sank drowned in the wonder surge:  
 Screened, withdrawn was the greatness it had sought;  
 Lost was the storm-stress and the warrior urge,  
 Lost the titan winging of the thought.

It lay at ease in a sweetness of heaven-sense  
 Delivered from grief, with no need left to aspire,  
 Free, self-dispersed in voluptuous innocence,  
 Lulled and borne into roseate cloud-fire.

But suddenly there soared a dateless cry,  
 Deep as Night, imperishable as Time;  
 It seemed Death's dire appeal to Eternity,  
 Earth's outcry to the limitless Sublime.

“O high seeker of immortality,  
Is there not, ineffable, a bliss  
Too vast for these finite harmonies,  
Too divine for the moment’s unsure kiss?

“Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,  
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,  
An unvalled mind dissolved in the Infinite,  
Force one with unimaginable rest?

“I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven;  
My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys,  
A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven;—  
My dumbness fills with echoes of a far Voice.

“By me the last finite, yearning, strives  
To reach the last infinity’s unknown,  
The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives  
And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone.”

Dissolving the kingdoms of happy ease  
Rocked and split and faded their dream-chime.  
All vanished; ungrasped eternities  
Sole survived and Timelessness seized Time.

Earth’s heart was felt beating below me still,  
Veiled, immense, unthinkable above  
My consciousness climbed like a topless hill,  
Crossed seas of Light to epiphanies of Love.

## Jivanmukta

There is a silence greater than any known  
 To earth's dumb spirit, motionless in the soul  
     That has become Eternity's foothold,  
     Touched by the infinitudes for ever.

A Splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,  
 That floods some deep flame-covered all-seeing eye;  
     Revealed it wakens when God's stillness  
     Heavens the ocean of moveless Nature.

A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,  
 Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters,  
     A single might of luminous quiet  
     Tirelessly bearing the worlds and ages.

A Bliss surrounds with ecstasy everlasting,  
 An absolute high-seated immortal rapture  
     Possesses, sealing love to oneness  
     In the grasp of the All-beautiful, All-beloved.

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills  
 Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,  
     Unrolls the form and sign of being,  
     Seated above in the omniscient Silence.

Although consenting here to a mortal body,  
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;  
For him the æons are a playground,  
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,  
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour  
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,  
Casting down light on the inconscient darkness,

He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives  
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession  
Infinity and the sempiternal  
All is his guide and beloved and refuge.

## In Horis Aeternum

A far sail on the unchangeable monotone of a slow slumbering sea,  
 A world of power hushed into symbols of hue, silent unendingly;  
 Over its head like a gold ball the sun tossed by the gods in their  
play  
 Follows its curve,—a blazing eye of Time watching the motionless  
day.

Here or elsewhere,—poised on the unreachable abrupt snow-  
solitary ascent  
 Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable Light, then ceases broken  
and spent,  
 Or in the glowing expanse, arid, fiery and austere, of the desert's  
hungry soul,—  
 A breath, a cry, a glimmer from Eternity's face, in a fragment  
the mystic Whole.

Moment-mere, yet with all eternity packed, lone, fixed, intense,  
 Out of the ring of these hours that dance and die, caught by  
the spirit in sense,  
 In the greatness of a man, in music's outspread wings, in a  
touch, in a smile, in a sound,  
 Something that waits, something that wanders and settles not,  
a Nothing that was all and is found.

## NOTES

[*From letters of the Author*]

### THE BIRD OF FIRE—TRANCE

These two poems are in the nature of metrical experiments. The first is a kind of compromise between the stress system and the foot measure. The stanza is of four lines, alternately of twelve and ten stresses. The second and fourth line in each stanza can be read as a ten-foot line of mixed iambs and anapæsts, the first and third, though a similar system subject to replacement of a foot anywhere by a single-syllable half-foot could be applied, are still mainly readable by stresses.

The other poem is an experiment in the use of quantitative foot measures. It is a four-line stanza reading alternately

~ - ~ / ~ - ~ / - ~ - /  
 - - ~ / ~ - - /            /  
 and    - ~ - / ~ - ~ / = ~ - /

It could indeed be read otherwise, in several ways, but read in the ordinary way it would lose all lyrical quality and the soul of its rhythm.

The Bird of Fire is the living vehicle of the gold fire of the Divine Light and the white fire of the Divine Tapas and the crimson fire of Divine Love—and everything else of the Divine Consciousness.

### SHIVA—The Inconscient Creator.

The quantitative metre of "Trance" is suited only for a very brief lyrical poem. For longer poems I have sought to use it as a base but to liberate it by the introduction of an ample number of modulations which allow a fairly free variation of the rhythm without destroying the consistency of the underlying rhythmic measure. This is achieved in "Shiva" by allowing as the main modulations (1) a pæon anywhere in place of an amphibrach, (2) the substitution of a long for a short syllable either in the first or the last syllable of an amphibrach, at will, (3) the substitution of a dactyl for an initial amphibrach, (4) the substitution of a long instead of short syllable in the middle of the final anapæst, both this and the ultimate syllable to be in that case stressed in reading, *e.g.*,

"deathless | and lóne héad."

The suppression of the full value of long syllables to make them figure as metrical shorts has to be avoided in quantitative metre.

Scan:

A face on | the cold dire | mountain peaks  
 Grand and still; | its lines white | and austere  
 Match with the | immeasured | snowy streaks  
 Cutting heaven, | implacable and sheer.

The Inconscient as the source and author of all material creation is one of the main discoveries of modern psychology, but it agrees with the idea of a famous Vedic hymn. In the Upanishads, Prajna, the Master of Sushupti, is the Ishwara and therefore the original Creator out of a superconscient sleep. The idea of the poem is that this creative Inconscient also is Shiva creating here life in matter out of an apparently inconscient material trance as from above he creates all the worlds (not the material only) from a superconscient trance. The reality is a supreme Consciousness—but that is veiled by the appearance on one side of the superconscient sleep, on the other of the material Inconscience. Here the emphasis is on the latter; the superconscient is only hinted at, not indicated,—it is the Infinity out of which comes the revealing Flame.

### THE LIFE HEAVENS

Further modulations have been introduced in this poem—a greater use is made of tetrasyllabic feet such as pæons, epitrites, di-iambes, ionics and, once only, the antispast—and in a few places the foot of three long syllables (molossus) has been used, and in others a foot extending to five syllables (e.g., Delivered from grief).

Scan:

A life of | intensities | wide, immune  
 Floats behind | the earth and | her life-fret,  
 A magic of | realms mastered by | spell and rune,  
 Grandiose, blissful, coloured, | increate.

There were two places in which at the time of writing there did not seem to me to be a satisfactory completeness and the addition of a stanza seemed to be called for—one at the end of the description of the Life Heavens, a stanza which would be a closing global description of the essence of the vital Heavens, the other (less imperatively called for) in



the utterance of the Voice. There it is no doubt very condensed, but it cannot be otherwise. I thought, however, that one stanza might be added hinting rather than stating the connection between the two extremes. The connection is between the Divine suppressed in its opposites and the Divine eternal in its own unveiled and undescended nature. The idea is that the other worlds are not evolutionary but typal and each presents in a limited perfection some aspect of the Infinite, but each complete, perfectly satisfied in itself, not asking or aspiring for anything else, for self-exceeding of any kind. That aspiration, on the contrary, is self-imposed on the imperfection of Earth; the very fact of the Divine being there, but suppressed in its phenomenal opposites, compels an effort to arrive at the unveiled Divine—by ascent, but also by a descent of the Divine Perfection for evolutionary manifestation here. That is why the Earth declares itself a deeper Power than Heaven because it holds in itself that possibility implied in the presence of the suppressed Divine here,—which does not exist in the perfection of the vital (or even the mental) Heavens.

#### JIVANMUKTA

Written in Alcaics. These Alcaics are not perhaps very orthodox. I have treated the close of the first two lines not as a dactyl but as a cretic and have taken the liberty in any stanza of turning this into a double trochee. In one closing line I have started the dactylic run with two short preliminary syllables and there is occasionally a dactyl or anapæst in unlawful places; the dactyls too are not all pure dactyls. The object is to bring in by modulations some variety and a more plastic form and easier run than strict orthodoxy could give. But in essence, I think, the alcaic movement remains in spite of these departures.

The subject is the Vedantic ideal of the living liberated man—*jīvan-mukta*—though perhaps I have given a pull towards my own ideal which the strict Vedantin would consider illegitimate.

#### IN HORIS ÆTERNUM

This poem on its technical side aims at finding a halfway house between free verse and regular metrical poetry. It is an attempt to avoid the chaotic amorphousness of free verse and keep to a regular form based on the fixed number of stresses in each line and part of a line while yet there shall be a great plasticity and variety in all the other elements of poetic rhythm, the number of syllables, the management of the feet, if any, the distribution of the stress-beats, the changing modulation of the rhythm.

*In Horis Æternum* was meant as a first essay in this kind, a very simple and elementary model. The line here is cast into three parts, the first containing two stresses, the second and third each admitting three, four such lines rhymed constituting the stanza.



# TRANSFORMATION AND OTHER POEMS



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## Transformation

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream ;  
    It fills my members with a might divine:  
    I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.  
Time is my drama or my pageant dream.  
Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme  
    And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine  
    Channels of rapture opal and hyaline  
For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.

I am no more a vassal of the flesh,  
    A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;  
    I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.  
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,  
    My body is God's happy living tool,  
    My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.



## Nirvana

All is abolished but the mute Alone.

    The mind from thought released, the heart from grief  
    Grow inexistent now beyond belief;

There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.

The city, a shadow picture without tone,

    Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief

    Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef

Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent

    Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still

    Replaces all,—what once was I, in It

A silent unnamed emptiness content

    Either to fade in the Unknowable

    Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

## The Other Earths

An irised multitude of hills and seas,  
And glint of brooks in the green wilderness,  
And trackless stars, and mirrored symphonies  
Of hues that float in ethers shadowless,  
A dance of fire-flies in the fretted gloom,  
In a pale midnight the moon's silver flare,  
Fire-importunities of scarlet bloom  
And bright suddenness of wings in a golden air,  
Strange bird and animal forms like memories cast  
On the rapt silence of unearthly woods,  
Calm faces of the gods on backgrounds vast  
Bringing the marvel of the infinitudes,  
Through glimmering veils of wonder and delight  
World after world bursts on the awakened sight.

## Thought the Paraclete

As some bright archangel in vision flies  
Plunged in dream-caught spirit immensities,  
Past the long green crests of the seas of life,  
Past the orange skies of the mystic mind  
Flew my thought self-lost in the vasts of God.  
Sleepless wide great glimmering wings of wind  
Bore the gold-red seeking of feet that trod  
Space and Time's mute vanishing ends. The face  
Lustred, pale-blue-lined of the hippogriff,  
Eremitic, sole, daring the bourneless ways,  
Over world-bare summits of timeless being  
Gleamed; the deep twilights of the world-abyss  
Failed below. Sun-realms of supernal seeing,  
Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss  
Drew its vague heart-yearning with voices sweet.  
Hungering, large-souled to surprise the unconned  
Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond,  
Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,  
Climbing high far ethers eternal-sunned,  
Thought the great-winged wanderer paraclete  
Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune.  
Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune.

## Moon of Two Hemispheres

A gold moon-raft floats and swings slowly  
And it casts a fire of pale holy blue light  
On the dragon tail aglow of the faint night  
That glimmers far,—swimming,  
The illumined shoals of stars skimming,  
Overspreading earth and drowning the heart in sight  
With the ocean depths and breadths of the Infinite.

A gold moon-ship sails or drifts ever  
In our spirit's skies and halts never, blue-keeled,  
And it throws its white-blue fire on this grey field,  
Night's dragon loop,—speeding,  
The illumined star-thought sloops leading  
To the Dawn, their harbour home, to the Light unsealed,  
To the sun-face Infinite, the Untimed revealed.

## Rose of God

Rose of God, vermillion stain on the sapphires of heaven,  
Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!  
Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,  
Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.

Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,  
Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!  
Live in the mind of our earthhood; O golden Mystery, flower,  
Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,  
 Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!  
 Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,  
 Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,  
Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!  
Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme;  
Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the  
                                        children of Time.

Rose of God like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,  
Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!  
Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss:  
Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss.

## NOTE

IN SOME of these poems, as in others of the *Six Poems*, a quantitative metrical system has been used which seems to have puzzled some critics, apparently because it does not follow the laws of quantity obtaining in the ancient classical languages. But those laws are quite alien to the rhythm and sound-structure of the English tongue; the attempt to observe them has always ended in deserved and inevitable failure. Another system has been followed here which is in agreement with the native rhythm of English speech. There what determines the metrical length or brevity of syllables is weight, the weight of the voice emphasis or the dwelling of the voice upon the sound. Where there is that emphasis or that dwelling of the voice, the syllable may be considered metrically long; where both are absent there will be, normally, a recognisable shortness which can only be cured by some aid of consonant weight or other lengthening circumstance. All stressed syllables are metrically long in English and cannot be otherwise however short the vowel may be, for they dominate the verse movement; this is a fact which is ignored in the traditional account of English quantity and which many experimenters in quantitative verse have chosen to disregard with disastrous consequences,—all their genius or skill in metrical technique could not save them from failure. On the other hand, a long vowel syllable can be regarded as metrically long even if there is no stress upon it. In the quantitative system used in these poems this possibility is converted into a law: metrical length is obligatory for all such natural syllabic longs, while a short-vowel syllable unstressed is normally short for metrical purposes unless it is very heavily weighted with consonants. But the mere occurrence of two or more consonants after a short vowel does not by itself make the syllable long as it necessarily does in Greek, Latin or Sanskrit.

The system may then be reduced to the following rules:—

1. All stressed syllables are regarded as metrically long, as also all syllables supported on a long vowel.
2. All short vowel syllables not stressed are regarded as short unless they are heavily weighted with consonants. But on this last point no fixed rule can be given; in each case the ear must be the judge.
3. There are a great number of sounds in English which can be regarded according to circumstances either as longs or as shorts. Here too the ear must decide in each case.

4. English quantity metres cannot be as rigid as the metres of ancient tongues. The rhythm of the language demands a certain variability, free or sparing, without which monotony sets in; accordingly, in all English metres modulation is admitted as possible. Even the most regular rhythms do not altogether shut out the substitution of other feet than those fixed in the normal basic arrangement of the line; they admit at least so much as is needed to give the necessary pliancy or variety to the movement. There is sometimes a very free use of such variations; but they ought not to be allowed to break the basic movement or overburden or overlay it. The same rule must apply in quantitative metres; especially in long poems modulations are indispensable.

This system is not only not at discord with the sound-structure of the language, it accords closely with its natural rhythm; it only regulates and intensifies into metrical pitch and tone the cadence that is already there even in prose, even in daily speech. If we take passages from English literature which were written as prose but with some intensity of rhythm, its movement can be at once detected, *e.g.*,

Cōnsidēr|thē lilīes|ōf thē fiēld,|hōw thēy grōw;||thēy tōil nōt|nēithēr  
dō|thēy spīn;||yēt I|sāy ūntō|yōu thāt ēvēn|Sōlōmōn|īn āll hīs|glōrȳ||  
wās nōt ārrāyed|like ūntō|ōne ōf thēse:|

or again,

Blēssēd āre|thē meēk;|fōr thēy shāl|īnhērīt|thē ēārth|. . . . .  
Blēssēd āre|thē pūre īn hēart;|fōr thēy shāl seē|Gōd;

or again, from Shakespeare's prose,

This goōdlȳ frāme|thē ēārth seēms tō|mē ā stērile|prōmōntōrȳ,|thīs  
mōst ēxcēllēnt cānōpȳ|thē āir, loōk yōū,|thīs brāve o'ērhang|īng  
fīrmāmēt,|thīs mājēstīc|āl roōf frētēd|with gōldēn fire|

and so on with a constant recurrence of the same quantitative movement all through; or, yet more strikingly,

Hōw ārt thou|fāllēn frōm|Heāvēn, Ō|Lūcīfēr,|sōn ōf thē|mōrnīng!

This last sentence can be read indeed as a very perfect hexameter. The first of these passages could be easily presented as four lines of free quantitative verse, each independent in its arrangement of feet, but all swaying in a single rhythm. Shakespeare's is most wonderfully balanced





metre also can be so written that it can be scanned as accentual verse; but pure stress metre depends entirely on stress ictus. In ordinary poetry stress and natural syllabic quantity enter in as elements of the rhythm, but are not, qua stress and quantity, essential elements of the basic metre: in pure stress metre there is a reversal of these values; quantity and accentual inflexion are subordinate and help to build the rhythm, but stress alone determines the metrical basis. In "Rose of God" each line is composed of six stresses, and the whole poem is built of five stanzas, each containing four such lines; the arrangement of feet varies freely to suit the movement of thought and feeling in each line. Thus,

Róse of | Gód, | damask fórcé of | Infinity, | red ícon of | míght,  
 Róse of | Pówer | with thy díam|ond hálo | píercing | the níght,  
 Abláze | in the wíll of | the mórtal, | desígn | the wónder of | thy plán,  
 Ímage of | Ímmor|tálicity, | outbréak of | the Gódhead | in mán. |

# TRANSLATIONS



## Mother India<sup>5</sup>

India, my India, where first human eyes awoke to heavenly light,  
All Asia's holy place of pilgrimage, great Motherland of might!  
World-mother, first giver to humankind of philosophy and  
sacred lore,  
Knowledge thou gav'st to man, God-love, works, art, religion's  
opened door.

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace  
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward ray!  
today?

To thy race, O India, God himself once sang the Song of Songs  
divine,  
Upon thy dust Gouranga danced and drank God-love's mysterious  
wine,  
Here the Sannyasin Son of Kings lit up compassion's deathless  
sun,  
The youthful Yogin, Shankar, taught thy gospel: "I and He  
are one."

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace  
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward  
today? ray!

\*Translated from the Bengali song of Dwijendralal Roy.

Art thou not she, that India, where the Aryan Rishis chanted  
The Veda's deep and dateless hymns and are we not their high  
Armed with that great tradition we shall walk the earth with progeny?  
O Mother, those who bear that glorious past may well be brave heads unbowed:  
and proud.

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace  
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward today?  
ray!

O even with all that grandeur dwarfed or turned to bitter loss  
How shall we mourn who are thy children and can vaunt thy and maim,  
mighty name?  
Before us still there floats the ideal of those splendid days of gold:  
A new world in our vision wakes, Love's India we shall rise to  
mould.

India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace  
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward today?  
ray!

## Mahalakshmi\*

In lotus-groves Thy spirit roves: where shall I find a seat for  
Thee?

To Thy feet's tread—feet dawn-rose red—opening my heart  
Thy throne shall be.

All things unholy hurt Thy soul:

I would become a stainless whole:

O World's delight, All-beauty's might! unmoving house  
Thy grace in me.

An arid heart Thou canst not bear:

It is Thy will love's bonds to wear:

Then by Thy sweetness' magic completeness make me  
Thy love's eternal sea.

\*Translated from the Bengali song of Anilbaran.



## **APPENDICES**





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## APPENDIX A.

### On Quantitative Metre

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# On Quantitative Metre

## *The Reason of Past Failures*

A DEFINITIVE verdict seems to have been pronounced by the critical mind on the long-continued attempt to introduce quantitative metres into English poetry. It is evident that the attempt has failed, and it can even be affirmed that it was pre-destined to failure; quantitative metre is something alien to the rhythm of the language. Pure quantity, dependent primarily on the length or brevity of the vowel of the syllable, but partly also on the consonants on which the vowel sustains itself, quantity as it was understood in the ancient classical languages, is in the English tongue small in its incidence, compared with stress and accent, and uncertain in its rules; at any rate, even in the most capable hands it has failed to form a practicable basis of metre. Accentual metre is normal in English poetry, stress metres are possible, but quantitative metres can only be constructed by a *tour de force*; artificial and incapable of normality or of naturalisation, they cannot get a certified right of citizenship. If quantity has to be understood in that and no other sense, this verdict must stand; all attempts made hitherto have been a failure, and not usually a brilliant failure. And yet this does not dispose of the question: an appeal is possible against the sentence of illegitimacy and banishment on the ground that from the very first the problem has been misunderstood and misstated, the methods used either a deviation from the true line or, even when close to it, a misfit; a better statement may lead to a solution that could well be viable.

At the very beginning of these attempts a double thesis was raised; two separate problems were closely associated together which are in their nature distinct, although they can be brought into close relation. There was, first, the problem of the naturalisation of classical metres in English poetry, and there was, mixed up with it, the problem of the free creation of quantitative English verse in its own right, on its own basis, with its own natural laws, not necessarily identical with those laid down in the ancient tongues. The main attempt then made was *not* to discover a true English principle of quantitative metre,—what was done was to bring in



classical metres built according to the laws of quantity proper to a classical tongue but of doubtful validity in a modern language. Chaucer, influenced by mediæval French and Italian poetry, had naturalised their metrical inventions by making accentual pitch and inflexion the basis of English metre. This revolution succeeded because he had called to his aid one of the most important elements in the natural rhythm of the language and it was easy for him by that happy choice to establish a perfect harmony between this rhythm and his new art of metrical building. The metrical movement he perfected—for others before him had attempted it—passed easily into the language, because he caught and lifted its native rhythm into a perfect beauty of sound captivating to the ear and moving to the inner witness and listener silent within us—the soul, to whom all art and all life should appeal and minister. This great victory was essential for the free flowering of poetry in the English tongue; the absence of any such *coup d'œil* of genius was one chief reason of its failure to flower as freely in so many human languages,—no creative genius found for them the route which leads to the discovery of a perfect plasticity of word and sound, a perfect expressiveness, a perfect beauty of rhythm. But with the Renaissance came a new impulse, a new influence; an enthusiasm was vividly felt for the greatness of structure and achievement of the Greek and Latin tongues—an achievement far surpassing anything done in the mediæval Romance languages—and a desire arose to bring this greatness of structure and achievement into English poetry. As Chaucer by the success of the accentual structure in verse and his discovery of its true and natural rhythm was able to bring in the grace and fluidity of the Romance tongues, so they too conceived that the best way to achieve their aim was to bring in the greatness of classical harmony and the nobility and beauty of Greek and Latin utterance by naturalising the quantitative metres of Virgil, Ovid, Horace. It was also natural that some of these innovators should conceive that this could be best done by imposing the classical laws of quantity wholesale on the English language.

At the first attempt a difference of view on this very point arose; there was a bifurcation of paths, but neither of these branchings led anywhere near the goal. One led nowhere at all, there was a laborious trudging round in a futile circle; the other turned straight back towards accentual metre and ended in the entire abandonment of the quantitative principle. Spenser in his experiments used all his sovereign capacity to force English verse into an unnatural classical mould, Sidney followed

his example. Harvey thought, rightly enough, that an adaptation to the natural rhythm of English was indispensable, but he failed to take more than a first step towards the right path; after him, those who followed his line could not get any farther,—in the end, in place of the attempt at quantitative verse, there was an adaptation of classical metres to the accentual system. Some who still experimented with quantity, feeling the necessity of making their verse normally readable, did this by taking care that their long quantities and stress or accentual pitch, wherever these came in, coincided as far as possible. But the result was not encouraging; it made the verse readable indeed, but stiff beyond measure. Even Tennyson in his lines on Milton, where he attempts this combination, seems to be walking on stilts,—very skilfully and nobly, but still on stilts and not on his own free God-given feet. As for other attempts which followed the Spenserian line of approach, they can best be described in Tennyson's own language—

“ Barbarous hexameters, barbarous pentameters ”

—and the alcaics, sapphics and galliambics were no better. A metre which cannot be read as normal English is read, in which light syllables are forced to carry a voice-weight which they have no strength to bear and strong stresses are compelled to efface themselves while small insignificant sounds take up their burden, is not a real and natural verse movement; it is an artificial structure which will never find an agreed place in the language.

No make-believe can reconcile us to such rhythms as Sidney's

In wind | ōr wā|tēr's || streām dō rē|quire tō bē| writ. |

Here two intractable iambic feet followed by a resolutely short syllable are compelled to dance a jig garbed as two spondees followed by a solitary long syllable; so disguised, they pretend to be the first half of a pentameter,—the second half with its faultless and natural metre and rhythm is of itself a condemnation of its predecessor. Neither can one accept Bridges'

Flōwerȳ dō|main thē flūsh|ing sōft | crōwding | lōvelinēss | ōf Spring |

where length is forced on an inexorable short like the “ing” of “flushing” and “crowding” and a pretence is made that an accentual iamb, “of Spring,” can be transformed into a quantitative spondee. Still worse, still

more impossible to digest or even to swallow, is his forced hexameter ending,

thě sč|rēnelý sč|lēm̄n spēlls. }

There two successive accentual trochees and a terminal long syllable are turned by force or by farce into a closing dactyl and spondee. Such are the ungainly antics into which the natural movements of verse have to be compelled in this game of thrusting the laws of quantity of an ancient language upon a modern tongue which has quite another spirit and body. What is possible and natural in a clear-cut ancient language where there is a more even distribution of the voice and both the short and long syllables can get their full sound-value, is impossible or unnatural in the English tongue; for there the alternation of stresses with unstressed short and light sounds is a constant and inescapable feature. That makes all the difference; it turns this kind of verse into a frolic of false quantities. In any case, the method has invariably resulted in failure from Spenser to Bridges; the greatness of some of the poets who have made this too daring and unnatural effort, has not been great enough to bring success to an impossible adventure.

There remains the alternative way, the adaptation of classical metres to the accentual mould, of which the accentual hexameter is the not too successful consequence; but this is not a solution of the problem of English quantitative verse. Even if successful, in every field and not only in the treatment of the hexameter, it would have only solved the other quite distinct problem of naturalising Greek and Latin metres in English. But even in this direction success has been either nil or partial and defective. The experiments have always remained experiments; there has been no opening of new paths, no new rhythmic discoveries or triumphant original creations. The writers carry with them very evidently the feeling of being experimenters in an abnormal kind; they achieve an artificial rhythm, their very language has an artificial ring: there is always a stamp of manufacture, not a free outflow of significant sound and harmonious word from the depths of the spirit. A poet trying to naturalise in English the power of the ancient hexameter or to achieve a new form of its greatness or beauty natural to the English tongue must have absorbed its rhythm into his very blood, made it a part of himself, then only could he bring it out from within him as a self-expression of his own being, realised and authentic. If he relies not on this inner inspiration, but solely on his technical ability for the purpose, there will be a failure; yet this is all

that has been done. There have been a few exceptions like Swinburne's magnificent sapphics; but these are isolated triumphs, there has been no considerable body of such poems that could stand out in English literature as a new form perfectly accomplished and accepted. This may be perhaps because the attempt was always made as a sort of leisure exercise and no writer of great genius like Spenser, Tennyson or Swinburne has made it a main part of his work; but more probably, there is a deeper cause inherent in the very principle and method of the endeavour.

Two poets, Clough and Longfellow, have ventured on a considerable attempt in this kind and have succeeded in creating something like an English hexameter; but this was only a half accomplishment. The rhythm that was so great, so beautiful or, at the lowest, so strong or so happy in the ancient tongues, the hexameter of Homer and Virgil, the hexameter of Theocritus, the hexameter of Horace and Juvenal becomes in their hands something poor, uncertain of itself and defective. There is here the waddle and squawk of a big water-fowl, not the flight and challenge of the eagle. Longfellow was an admirable literary craftsman in his own limits, the limits of ordinary metre perfectly executed in the ordinary way, but his technique like his poetic inspiration had no subtlety and no power. Yet both subtlety and power, or at the very least one of these greater qualities, are imperatively called for in the creation of a true and efficient English hexameter; it is only a great care and refinement or a great poetic force that can overcome the obstacles. Longfellow had his gift of a certain kind of small perfection on his own level; Clough had energy, some drive of language, often a vigorous if flawed and hasty force of self-expression. It cannot be said that their work in this line was a total failure; the "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich," "Evangeline" and the "Courtship of Miles Standish" have their place, though not a high place, in English poetry. But the little they achieved was not enough to acclimatise the hexameter permanently in English soil; nor did their work encourage others to do better, on the contrary the imperfection of its success has been a deterrent, not an incentive.

It is probable indeed that the real reason of the failure went much deeper; it lay in the very character of the mould they invented. The accentual hexameter was a makeshift and could not be the true thing; its false plausibility could not be an equivalent for the great authentic rhythms of old, its mechanically regular or common uninspiring beat, sometimes stumbling or broken, is something quite different from the powerful

sweep, the divine rush or the assured truth of tread of that greater word-music. The hexameter is a quantitative verse or nothing; losing the element of quantity, it loses also its quality. Admitting that quantity as it is ordinarily understood cannot be the sole basic element in any English metre, yet for the hexameter, perhaps for any classical rhythm, the discovery and management of true quantity is an intimate part of its technique; to neglect or to omit it is to neglect or omit something essential, indispensable. Accentual pitch gives beat, but its beat does not depend on quantity except in so far as the stress ictus creates a genuine length valid for any rhythm which is native to the language. To find out what does constitute true quantity is the first need, only then can there be any solution of the difficulty. Tennyson, like Harvey, missed this necessity; he was content to fuse long syllable and stress and manage carefully his short quantities conceived according to the classical law; this he did admirably, but two or three efforts in this kind of tight-rope acrobatics were as much as he cared to manage. But true quantity in English must be something else; it must be something inherent in the tongue, recognisable everywhere in its rhythm,—not an artifice or convention governing its verse forms alone, but a technique of Nature flowing spontaneously through the very texture of the language as a whole.

### Metre and the Three Elements of English Rhythm

There are three elements which constitute the general exterior forms of rhythm in the English language,—accent, stress, quantity. Each of them can be made in theory the one essential basis of metre, relegating the other indispensable elements to the position of subordinate factors which help out the rhythm but are not counted in the constitution of the metrical basis. But in practice accent and stress combining with it and aiding it have alone successfully dominated English verse-form; intrinsic quantity has been left to do what it can for itself under their rule. The basis commonly adopted in most English poetry since Chaucer is the accentual rhythm, the flow of accentual pitch and inflexion which is so all-important an element in the intonation of English speech. In any common form of English poetry we find all based on pitch and inflexion; the feet are accentual feet, the metrical "length" or "shortness" of syllables—not their inherent quantity—is determined by natural or willed location of a pitch of accent or some helping inflexion falling on the main supporting

syllable of the foot and by the absence of any such pitch or accentual inflexion on those that are subordinate and supported: the main accented syllables are supposed to be metrically long, the subordinate unaccented short, there is no other test or standard. To take a familiar example:

The way | was long, | the wind | was cold, |  
The min|strel was | infirm | and old. | \*

Here there is a regular iambic beat determined by the persistent accentual high pitch or low pitch falling on the second syllable of the foot. In a stress scansion the second foot of the second line would rank not as an iamb but as a pyrrhic, for it is composed of two short unstressed syllables; but there is the minor accentual inflexion which commonly occurs as a sort of stepping-stone helping the voice across a number of unstressed syllables; that, slight as it is, is sufficient to justify in accentual theory the description of this foot as an iamb. Stress usually coincides with the high accentual pitch and is indispensable as the backbone of the rhythm, but it was not treated until recently either as an independent or as the main factor. Inherent quantity is not at all regarded; long-syllable quantity sometimes coincides with both high pitch and stress, sometimes it stands by itself as a rhythmic element, but that makes no difference to the metre.

The instance given is an example of the iambic pentameter with an extreme, an almost mechanical regularity of beat; so, for completeness, we may turn to poetry of a freer and larger type.

Full man|y a glo|rious mor|ning have | I seen  
Flattering | the moun|tain-tops | with sove|reign eye.

Here there are two glide anapæsts in the first line, an initial dactyl in the second,—three departures from the regular iambic beat. Such liberty of variation can always be indulged in English verse and it is sometimes pushed to much greater lengths—as in the line—

Cover | her face; | my eyes daz|zle; she | died young |

where there is only one iamb in the five feet of the line; the other four feet are respectively a trochee, an antibacchius, a pyrrhic and a closing

\*The sign / indicates the accentual high pitch, the sign \ the transitional inflexion, unobtrusive and without stress or with only a half-stress.

spondee. Nevertheless the basic system of the metre or at least some form of its spirit asserts itself even here by a predominant beat on the final syllable of most of the feet: all the variations are different from each other, none predominates so as to oust and supplant the iamb in its possession of the metric base. In Webster's line this forceful irregularity is used with a remarkable skill and freedom; the two first feet are combined in a choriamb to bring out a vehemence of swift and abrupt unexpressed emotion; in the rest intrinsic quantitative longs combine with short-vowel stress lengths to embody a surcharged feeling—still unexpressed—in a strong and burdened movement: all is divided into three brief and packed word-groups to bring out by the subtly potent force of the rhythm the overpowering yet suppressed reactions of the speaker. The language used, however vivid in itself, could not have done as much as it does, if it were deprived of this sound-effect; it would have given the idea by its external indices, but it is the rhythm that brings out the concealed feeling. Each word-group has a separate rhythm, an independent life, yet it is by following each other rapidly in a single whole that the three together achieve a complete force and beauty. If the three clauses of this line were cut up into successive lines in modern free-verse fashion, they would lose most of their beauty; it is the total rhythmic power of these three hammer-strokes that brings to the surface all that underlies the words. But without the aid of the unusual arrangements of stress and quantity it could not have been done.

This shows up the true nature of the accentual system as distinguished from its formal theory. It becomes clear that the supposed longs and shorts constituting its feet are not real quantities, they are not composed of long and short syllables,—on the contrary, a very short sound can be made to bear the weight of the whole foot while longer ones trail after it in dependence on their diminutive leader. What we really have is a system of recurrent strokes or beats intervening at a fixed place in each foot, while the syllables which are not hammered into prominent place by this kind of stroke or beat fill the interspaces. A regular metrical base is thus supplied, but the rhythm can be varied or modulated by departures from the base—from it but always upon it; for these departures, variations or modulations, relieve its regularity which might otherwise become monotonous, but do not replace or frustrate the essential rhythm. If the modulations overlay too much the basic sound-system so as to obliterate it or if they are so ill-managed as to substitute another rhythm for it, then

we have a rhythmic mixture; or else there is a break of the metrical movement which can be legitimate only if it is done with set purpose and justified by the success of that purpose.

In all these instances it will be seen that inherent quantity combined with distribution of stress—which is also as we shall see a true quantity-builder—plays always the same role; it is used as an accessory or important element of the rhythm, to give variety, subtlety, deeper significance. A longer quotation may illustrate this position and function of stress distribution and distribution of quantity in accentual metre with more amplitude—

The lūn|atic, | the lov|er and | the poēt  
 Are of | imag|ina|tion all | compact|:  
 One sees | more de|vils than | vāst hell | can hold|;  
 That is, | the mad|man; the lov|er, all | as fran|tic,  
 Sees Hel|en's beau|ty in | a brow | of Ēgypt|:  
 The po|et's eye, | in a | fine fren|zy roll|ing,  
 Doth glance | from heav|en to earth, | from earth | to heaven|;  
 And as | imagina|tion bo|dies forth  
 The forms | of things | unknown, | the po|et's pen  
 Turns them | to shāpes | and gives | to air|y no|thing  
 A lo|cal ha|bita|tion and | a name.\*

The first six lines of this passage owe much of their beauty to the unusual placing of the stresses and the long-vowelled syllables; in each line the distribution differs and creates a special significant rhythm which deepens and reinforces the outward sense and adds to it that atmosphere of the unexpressed reality of the thing in itself which it is in the power of rhythm, of word-music as of all music, to create. In the first line two

\*Here only the stresses are marked, by the sign |, and the long-vowel syllables, by the sign —; the quantitative shorts are left unmarked: the accents need no indication.



pyrrhics separate the two long-vowelled sounds which give emphasis and power to the first and last feet from the narrower short-vowel stressed foot in the middle: this gives a peculiar rhythmic effect which makes the line no longer a mere enumerative statement, it evokes three different rhythmic significances isolating and locating each of the three pure Imaginatives in his own kind. In the second line a swift short movement in its first half slows down to a heavy prolonged movement in its second, a swift run with a long and tangled consequence; here too the expressiveness of the rhythm is evident. In the third line there are no fewer than four long vowels and a single pyrrhic separates two rhythmic movements of an unusual power and amplitude expressive of the enormity of the lunatic's vision and imagination; here too, short-vowel stress and intrinsic-quantity longs are combined no less than three times and it is this accumulation that brings about the effect. In the fifth and sixth lines the separative pyrrhic in the middle serves again a similar purpose. In the fifth it helps to isolate in contrast two opposites each emphasised by its own significant rhythm. In the sixth line there are again four long vowels and a very expressive combination of short-vowel stressed length with intrinsic long syllables, a spacious amphibrach like a long plunge of a wave at the end; no more expressive rhythm could have been contrived to convey potently the power, the excitement and the amplitude of the poet's vision.\* Afterwards there follow five lines of a normal iambic movement, but still with a great subtlety of variation of rhythm and distribution of quantity creating another kind of rhythmic beauty, a beauty of pure harmonious word-music, but this too is the native utterance of the thing seen and conveys by significant sound its natural atmosphere. This passage shows us how much the metrically unrecognised element of intrinsic quantity can tell in poetic rhythm bringing real significations into what would be otherwise only sheer beauty of sound; quantity is one among its most important elements, even though it is not reckoned in the constitution of the metre. It combines with stress distribution to give power and expressive richness to the beat or, as it has been called, the strokes and flicks of accentual verse.

It has been seen that accentual high pitch and stress most frequently coincide;—indeed, many refuse to make any distinction between stress of

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\*A combination of powerful intrinsic longs and equally powerful short-vowel stresses help to create two of the most famous "mighty lines" of Marlowe,—

Is this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burned the topless towers of Ilium?

accent and stress proper. The identity is so close that all the passages cited—and accentual verse generally—can, if we so choose, be scanned by stress instead of accentual inflexion. But that at once brings in a difference: for the lower accentual inflexions have then to be ignored because they do not carry in them anything that can be called a stress, as a result syllables which are treated as long in the conventional scansion because of this slight accentual help have now, since they are unstressed, to be regarded as short. Iambs, so reputed, cease, in this reckoning, to be iambs and become pyrrhics; an iambic pentameter has often to be read in the stress scansion as an imperfectly iambic stress verse because of the frequent modulations, trochee or pyrrhic, anapæst, amphibrach or spondee. But apart from this, there can be a more independent stress principle of metre; for, properly speaking, stress means not accentual high pitch, but weight of voice emphasis; it is a brief hammer-stroke of the voice from above which comes down on a long-vowel or a short-vowel syllable and gives even to the latter a metrical length and power which, when without stress, it does not naturally have. This stroke can thus confer metrical length even on a very short vowel or slightest short syllable, because it drives it firmly in like a nail into the wall, so that other unstressed sounds can hang loosely upon it. This provides a distinctive ground-frame which can be generalised and so made into a metrical base.

There can then be a pure stress scansion and pure stress metres in their own right without any justification by accent. For in stress metre proper the high accentual pitches are swallowed up into stress; any other rise or fall of accentual inflexion is ignored,—it is allowed to influence the rhythm but it does not determine or affect the basic metrical structure. Accent can in this way disappear altogether as a metrical base; stress replaces it. Here, for example, are lines composed entirely of stress pæons—

I have wandered | in the valleys | of Ecstasy, | I have listened | to the  
                   |                   |                   |  
                   murmur | and the passion | of its streams, |  
                   |                   |                   |  
 I have stood up | on the mountains | of the Splendour, | I have spun a | round  
                   |                   |                   |  
                   my spirit | like a garment | the purple of | its skies.

It is evident that here there are accentual inflexions other than those taken up into stress, on one syllable even a low pitch, but because they are not

reckoned as stresses, they do not count in the metrical structure of the lines. Or there may be a still freer stress metrification which rejects any scheme of regular feet and refuses to recognise the necessity of a fixed number of syllables either to the foot or the line; it regards only the fall of the stress and is faithful to that measure alone.

A far sail | on the unchangcable monotone | of a slow slumbering sea. |

The line is divided into three word-groups; the first contains two stresses, the others carry each three stresses, but the beats are distributed at pleasure: sometimes they are close together, sometimes they stand separated by far intervals amid a crowd of short unstressed syllables. Sometimes there is a closely packed movement loosening itself at the end,—

Over its head | like a gold ball, the sun | tossed by the gods in their play. |

Sometimes a loose run gathers itself up in its close into a compact movement:

Here or elsewhere, | poised on the unreachablc abrupt | snow-solitary  
ascent. |

Or any other movement can be chosen which is best suited to the idea or the feeling of the individual line. Quantity as such is here immaterial for metre building; it is of value only in so far as it coincides with stress and gives it an ampler fullness of metrical length so as to build and sustain more strongly the rhythmic totality of the line and the stanza.

But what then of this third element, quantity? Its importance is evident, but it does not form by itself the backbone of the natural rhythm of the language: quantity in English seems to intervene only as a free element taking its chance part in the general movement or its place assigned at will in the architecture. And yet quantity of some kind, shorts, longs, intermediate sounds, is ubiquitous and there seems to be no reason why it should not regulate metre. Indeed, every system affirms some kind of quantity as its constituent material. Stress metre arranges its rhythms by taking all stressed syllables as long, all unstressed syllables as metrically short; accent affirms similarly its own principle of quantity, though here the word seems to be a misnomer. Can then quantity, properly speaking, pure quantity, stand by itself as the whole basis of a metrical system, as accent and stress have done? Can it similarly leave the other

two elements, stress and accent, to influence and vary the rhythm but not allow them to interfere in the building of the metre? Can there be in English poetry a quantitative as well as an accentual or a stress building of verse, natural to the turn of the language, recognised and successful? and must stress or accentual lengths in such a metrical system be excluded from the idea of length? For everything here depends upon what we understand by quantity; if stress lengths are admitted, the problem of quantitative metre loses its difficulty, otherwise it seems insoluble.

The experimenters in pure quantitative verse have excluded stress from their theory of metrical lengths; they have admitted only intrinsic lengths determined by the vowel of the syllable and positional lengths determined by the number of succeeding consonants. That there is a fundamental falsity in this theory is shown by the fact that their lines cannot be read; or else in order to make them readable, an unnatural weight has to be thrown on sounds that are too slender to bear it; a weird sound-system full of false values is artificially created. But stress is a main, if not the main, feature of English rhythm; a metrical method ignoring it is impracticable. A pure quantitative verse of this manufacture has therefore to be ruled out, both because of its intrinsic artificiality and its unsuccessful result; it has to be abandoned as impossible or as inherently false. Those experimenters who avoid these false values and try to get rid of the difficulty by allowing only those stresses which coincide with intrinsic and positional longs, are on firmer ground and have some chance of arriving at something practicable. But their efforts too are hampered by the classical theory that the support of more than one consonant after a short vowel is sufficient to make short syllables metrically long, a statement which is true of the classical languages but not true of English. This either leads them into the introduction of false quantities which cannot stand the test of natural reading or drives them to oblige their longs and shorts to coincide with accentual or stress longs and shorts. Thus we see quantitative feet come to coincide exactly or predominantly with stress or accentual feet in Harvey's hexameter verse,—

Fāme wĭth ā|būndānce | māķēth ā | mǎn thrice | blēssēd ānd\* | hāppy.

In Sidney's line—

These be her words, but a woman's words to a love that is eager

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\*The word *and* here ought by the classicist theory to be long because of its two consonants after the vowel and still longer because it is further supported by the initial *h* of *happy*.

there happens to be a similar predominant identification of quantity with accent or stress, and it is this that makes the line readable. In reality these are stress hexameters, for in each there are syllables, as in *wōman's*, *lōve*, *hāppy*, which are long by stress only, and not by either inherent or positional quantity. But, on the other hand, feet which would be trochees in accentual or stress verse are reckoned here quite artificially as spondees, *abundance*, *woman's*, because of the two-or-more-consonants theory; but the closing syllables of these two words, if listened to by the ear and not measured by the eye, are very clearly short, even though not among the shortest possible, and it is only by a violence of the mind or a convention that they can be reckoned as long and this kind of very slightly loaded trochee promoted to the full dignity of a spondee. Evidently, we must seek elsewhere for a true theory of English quantity and a sound basis for quantitative verse.

### A Theory of True Quantity

If we are to get a true theory of quantity, the ear must find it; it cannot be determined by mental fictions or by reading with the eye: the ear too in listening must exercise its own uninfluenced pure hearing if it is not to go astray. So listening, we shall find that intrinsic or inherent quantity and the positional sound-values are not the only factors in metrical length, there is also another factor, the weight-length; it may even be said that all quantity in English is determined by weight, all syllables that bear the weight of the voice are long, all over which the voice passes lightly are short. But the voice-weight on a vowel is determined in three different ways. There is a dwelling of the voice, a horizontal weight-bar laid across the syllable, or there is its rapid passing, an absence of the weight-bar: that difference decides its natural length, it creates the inherent or intrinsic long or short, *lāzily*, *sweētnēss*. There is again a vertical ictus weight of the voice, the hammer-stroke of stress on the syllable; that of itself makes even a short-vowel syllable metrically long, as in *heāvily*, *āridit̃y*, *chānnēl*,\*

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\*The double consonant here, as in other words like *happy*, *tell*, can make no difference even in the classicist theory, because it is a mere matter of spelling and represents a single, not a double sound,—the sound is the same as in *panēl*.

*cánāl*; the short-vowel syllables that have not the lengthening ictus or vertical weight and have not either the horizontal weight of the voice upon them remain light and therefore short. It is evident that these words are respectively a natural dactyl, second pæon, trochee, iamb, yet all their syllables are short, apart from the stress; but what true rhythm or metre could treat as other than long these stressed short-vowel syllables? In the words, *nārrāīve*, *mān-eātēr*, *brūtālītŷ*, *cōntēmplāīve*, *īncārnāīc*, we see this triple power of length at work within one word,—weight-bar long syllables stressed or unstressed, hammer-stroke-weighted short-vowelled longs, natural unweighted short syllables. It is clear that there can be no true reduction of stressed or unstressed or of intrinsic long or short to a sole one-kind principle; both stress and vowel length work together to make a complex but harmonious system of quantity. But, yet again, there is a third factor of length-determination; there is consonantal weight, a lingering or retardation of the voice compelled by a load of consonants, or there is a free unencumbered light movement. This distinction creates the positionally long syllable, short by its vowel but lengthened by its consonants, *strēngth*, *swīft*, *ābstrāct*; where there is no such weight or no sufficient weight of consonants buttressing up the short syllable, it remains short, unless lengthened by stress. But we must consider separately how far this third or consonantal element is operative, whether its effect is invariable and absolute as the classicists would have it or only produces its result according to circumstance.

It is evident to the natural ear that stress confers in its own right metrical length on the syllable in which it occurs; even an extreme shortness of the vowel does not take away the lengthening force given. To the ear it stands out that the feet in Webster's line, "*mŷ ēyes daz|zle*" and "*she|dīed young*," are, quantitatively, antibacchius\* and spondee; the one is not and cannot be a true anapæst, as it would or can be accounted by convention in accentual scansion, the other is not and cannot be either iamb or trochee. The stress long naturally com-

\*Unless we consider *mŷ* as long, which is a disputable point; the sound is inherently a long-vowel one, but depressed by the absence of stress or accentual high pitch. In quantitative verse this should not matter; it can retain in spite of the depression its native dignity as a long-vowel syllable.

bins here with the intrinsic long to make antibacchius or spondee, because it has itself a true metrical length which is equivalent to that of the long-vowel syllable, though not identical in nature. This stress length, in any valid theory of quantity, cannot be ignored; its ictus weight and the conveyed force of length which the weight carries with it cannot be whittled down to shortness by any mental decree. In accentual verse its power is usually absorbed by coincidence with accentual high pitch and so it is satisfied and does not need to put in a separate claim; but in quantitative verse too it insists on its right and, if denied, fatally disturbs by its presence the rhythm that tries to disown or ignore it. In true quantitative verse, stress lengths and intrinsic lengths can and must be equally accepted because they both carry weight enough to burden the syllable with an enhanced sound-value. The admission or generalisation of the idea of weight lengths clears up many cobwebs and, because it corresponds with the facts, provides us with a rational system of quantitative verse.

What difficulty remains arises from the theory drawn from the classical languages that a sequence of more than one consonant after a short vowel—whether in the word itself or with the help of an initial consonant or consonants in the word that follows—compensates for the shortness and gives the syllable, inexorably, a value of metrical length. This is palpably untrue, as has been shown by the stumbles of Sidney and Bridges and every other classicist operator in quantitative verse. Let us again consult the ear, not the theorising mind; what is its judgment on this point if we listen, for instance, to these four hexameter lines based on natural and true quantity?

Öne änd ün|ärmed in thē | cār wās thē | drivēr; | grēy wās hē, |  
shrünkēn,  
 Wörn with hīs | dēcādes. Tō | Pērgāmā | cinctūred with | strēngth  
Cȳclō|pēän  
 Öld änd ä|lōne hē ār|rīved, īnsīg|nīfīcānt, | feēblēst öf | mōrtāls,  
 Cārřyīng | Fāte īn hīs | hēlplēss | hānds änd thē | dōöm öf än | ěmpīrc.

According to the classical theory words and syllables like “and,” “of,” “in,” “the,” “he,” “ing” should be treated as long since or when two or three consonants come immediately after the vowel within the line. But this is quite false; the “dr” of “driver” does not as a matter of fact make the “the” before it long; the natural shortness of “with” is not abolished by the “h” of the following word “his,” or the shortness

of "his" by the "d" of "decades." All these small light words are so intrinsically short, so light in their very nature, that nothing, or nothing short of an unavoidable stress, can force quantitative length or weight of sound upon them. Even the short "i"s and short "a" of "insignificant" and the short "e" of "feeblest" retain their insignificance and feebleness in spite of the help of the two consonants occurring after them,—the voice passes too swiftly away for any length to accrue before it has left them; there is no weight, no dwelling or lingering upon them sufficient to give them a greater sound-value. It would be a strange and extravagant prosody that would scan the first line—

Ōne ānd ūn|ārmēd īn thē |cār wās thē|drīvēr; |grēy wās hē,|shrūnkēn,

though it might still scan as a hexameter with bacchius and molossus twice repeated as modulations in place of the dactyl; but it could not be read aloud in that way,—the ear would immediately contradict the arbitrary dictates of the eye and the inapplicable rigidity of the mental theory.

This is not to deny that an additional consonant or consonants within the word after and before the vowel do give greater length to the syllable as a whole; but this does not necessarily transfer it from the category of shorts to the category of longs. At most, when the weight of consonants is not heavy and decisive, it makes it easier for these midway sounds to figure as lengthened shorts; it helps a trochee to serve as a substitute modulation for a spondee but it does not transform it into a spondee. To take an instance from a hexameter movement—

Wind in the forests, bees in the grove,—spring's ardent cymbal

Thrilling, the voice of the cuckoo.

Here the word "ardent" easily replaces a dactyl or spondee as a modulation, but it remains trochaic. There is more possibility of treating "forests" here with its three heavy consonants as a spondee,—a possibility, not a necessity invariable in all places, for one could very well write "in the forests of autumn" in spite of the three consonants, as the orthodox close of a dactylic hexameter. Let us try again with yet another example, this time of wholly or fundamentally dactylic



hexameters,—

“Onward from continent sailing to continent, ever from harbour  
Hasting to harbour, a wanderer joining\* ocean to ocean;”

Here the word “continent” clearly does not become a cretic, even when a third consonant follows like the “s” of “sailing,” still less when a vowel follows; a slight weight is there, but it is altogether insufficient to hamper the pure dactylic flow of the line.

It is only a sufficient consonant weight that can change the category; but even then the result depends less on the number than on the power and heaviness of the consonants composing the word; the theory that it is the number of consonants that determines metrical length cannot stand always. Thus the word *strength* or the word *stripped* is long wherever it may occur, but *string* with its five consonant sounds is long mainly by the voice ictus falling on it; where that lacks it may remain short by the inherent value of its vowel: *heart-string*, *hamstring* sound more natural as trochees than as spondees; *hamstringing* carries weight as a dactyl, it is too weak to be a good bacchius. In these matters it is always the ear that must judge, there can be no rule of thumb or fixed mathematical measure determinable by the eye of the reader; it is the weight or lightness of the syllable, the slowed down or unencumbered rapid passage of the voice, the pressure or slightness of its step in passing that makes the difference, and of that the ear alone can be the true judge or arbiter.

In any case it is only the internal consonants that matter; for it is doubtful whether initial consonants in a word that follows can, even when they are many, radically influence the quantity of a preceding syllable. This rule of backward influence could prevail in the classical tongues because there the voice was more evenly distributed over the words; this evenness gave a chance to the short syllables to have their full sound-value and a slight addition of consonantal sound might overweight them and give them, either internally or in position, a decisive length value. Intrinsic quantity also was not crushed under the weight of stress as in English and turned into a secondary factor, it was and remained a prime factor in the rhythm. There is accentual pitch and inflexion, but it does not take the first place. Thus the first lines of the

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\*This word is a trochaic modulation, it is not intended to figure as a spondee.

Æneid,—

Ármā vír|úmquē cá|nō, Tro|jæ qui|prímus ab|órīs  
 Ítālī|ām, fá|tō prófū|gūs, Lā|vínāquē|vénit  
 Lítōrā.|—

if they were read like an English line, would become some kind of irregular and formless accentual hexameter;—

Árma | vírumque | cáno, | Trojæ qui | prímus ab|órīs  
 Ítālī|am, fáto | profúgus, La|vínāque | vénit  
 Lítora.|—

stress would preside and quantity fall into a subordinate second place. If this did not and could not happen, it was evidently because the accent was an inflexion or pitch of the voice and not stress, not an emphatic pressure.\* In English stress or voice emphasis predominates and there is a very uneven distribution of sound-values in which quantity is partly determined and, where not determined, considerably influenced by stress; it has some difficulty in asserting its full independent value. Moreover the words do not cohere or run into each other as in a Sanskrit line, (this cohesion was the *raison d'être* of the complicated law of Sandhi by which the closing letter of one word so frequently unites with the initial letter of its successor in a conjunct sound); each word in English is independent and has its own metrical value unaffected by the word that follows. In Sanskrit, as in Latin and Greek, the short syllable having already its full natural sound-value is affected by the additional consonant and passes into the category of longs by the force of the consonant weightage, but these conditions are not naturally present in English verse.

\*In the Latin metre accent and quantity coincide in the last two feet but not in the earlier four feet; the Harvey type of hexameter has been criticised for not following this rule, but the writers had no choice,—to do otherwise would have brought in the conflict between stress and quantity which for the reason here stated could not occur in Latin. In the English hexameter accent, stress and quantity have inevitably to fuse together in the main long syllable of the foot; relief from a too insistent beat has to be sought by other natural means or technical devices, modulation, the greater value given to long unstressed syllables, variation of foot-grouping, pause, *cæsura*.

There is therefore no good reason, or at least no essential reason, for the admission of a rule allowing or obliging a throw-back of influence from a following word upon its predecessor. In accentual or stress metre no such rule prevails,—one never thinks of this element in arranging one's line; there is nothing that compels its adoption in quantitative verse. If these initial consonants created an obstacle to the pace of the voice sufficient to make it linger or pause, then such an effect would be justified,—the closing short syllable of the preceding word would or might be lengthened: but, normally, the obstacle is so slight that it is not felt and the voice takes it in its stride and passes on without any slackening or with only a slight slackening of its pace. The distinctness of each word from another does not, indeed, create any gap or pause, but it is strong enough to preserve for it its independence, its separate self-value in the total rhythm of the line, the word-group or the clause. This does not destroy the value of consonant weight in the sound system; it is evident that a crowding or sparseness of consonants will make a great difference to the total rhythm, it will produce a greater or less heaviness or lightness; but that is a rhythmic effect quite distinct from any imperative influence on the metre. An iamb does not become a spondee, a dactyl does not become a cretic because its final syllable is followed by a consonant or even by a group of consonants. There is, then, no sense in dragging in the classical rule where its admission is quite contrary to the natural instinct and practice of the language.

If these considerations are accepted as valid, the way lies open for the construction of true quantitative metre; a sound and realistic theory of it becomes possible. Four rules or sets of rules can be formulated which will sum up the whole base of the theory:—

(1) All stressed syllables are metrically long, as are also all long-vowel syllables even without stress.

All short-vowel syllables are metrically short, unless they are lengthened by stress—or else by a sufficient weight of consonants or some other lengthening sound-element; but the mere fact of more than one consonant coming after a short vowel, whether within the word or after it, or both in combination, is not sufficient to confer length upon the syllable. Heaviness caused by a crowding of consonants affects the rhythm of a line or part of a line but does not alter its metrical values.

Each word has its own metrical value which cannot be radically

influenced or altered by the word that follows.

(2) The English language has many sounds which are doubtful or variable in quantity; these may be sometimes used as short and sometimes as long according to circumstance. Here the ear must be the judge.

(3) Quantity within the syllable itself is not so rigidly fixed as in the ancient languages; often position or other circumstances may alter the metrical value of a syllable. A certain latitude has to be conceded in such cases, and there again the ear must be the judge.

(4) Quantity metres cannot be as rigid and unalterable in English as in the old classical tongues; for the movement of the language is pliant and flexible and averse to rigidity and monotone. English poetry has always a fundamental metrical basis, a fixed normality of the feet constituting a line; but it relieves the fixity by the use of modulations substituting, with sometimes a less, sometimes a greater freedom, other feet for the normal. This rule of variation, very occasionally admitted in the classical tongues but natural in English poetry, must be applied or at least permitted in quantitative metres also; otherwise, in poems of some length, their rhythms may become stereotyped in a too rigid sameness and fatigue the ear.

No other rule than these four need be laid down, for the rest must be left to individual choice and skill in technique.

In the basic structure of quantitative verse so arranged the three elements of English rhythm, accent, stress and intrinsic quantity are none of them excluded; all are united or even fused together. Accentual high pitch is taken up into stress; low pitch, not amounting to stress, as also slighter accentual inflexions have their place in the rhythm and the intonation but not in the metre; they are not allowed to determine the metrical quantity of the syllable on which they fall. For, in fact, unless they amount to stress, these voice inflexions do not confer length of true quantity; the quantity conferred by them in accentual verse is conventional and need not be admitted where the accentual basis is abandoned and the convention is not needed. Stress itself is admitted as a quantitative element because it constitutes, by the weight of the voice which it lays on the syllable, a true metrical length, a strong sound-value. Intrinsic quantity, which is not recognised as a metrical constituent in the traditional verse system, recovers here its legitimate place. As a result quantitative metres can be constructed

which, like accentual and stress metres but unlike the abortive constructions of the classicists, can flow naturally in a free movement, a movement native to the language; for they will combine in themselves without disfiguration or forcing all the natural elements of the rhythm or sound-movement proper to the English tongue.

It may even be said that all English speech, colloquial, prose or verse, has this as its natural rhythm, preserves these normal sound-values. This universality will be at once evident if we take at will or even take at random any snatch of conversation or any prose passage caught from anywhere or everywhere and test by it this rule of quantity; it will be found that the rule is in all cases applicable.

I hăve dē|cīdēd tō|stārt tōm|ōrrōw. | It is nō ūse|pū|tting ōff|mā  
gōing |āny lōngēr|.

These sentences set out with a dactylo-trochaic movement and change to less simple feet, ionic a minore, cretic, bacchius, double trochee. Or if you hear an irate voice shouting—

· Gēt ōut ōf thāt| ōr I'll kīck yōū,|

and have sufficient leisure and equanimity of mind to analyse the rhythm of this exhortation, you will find yourself in the presence of an excited double iamb followed by a vehement antispast, and can then conscientiously determine the rhythm of your own answer. Or if one takes, as a resting-house between colloquial speech and literary prose, the first advertisement that meets the eye in any daily newspaper, the result will still infallibly illustrate our rule. For example,

This cōlūmn|is intēdēd|tō gīve|pūb|līcītē |tō thē ā|mēnītēs|  
ānd cōmmērcīal|intērēsts|ōf Bāngālōre.|—

where amphibrach, pæons, iamb, tribrach, dactyl, cretic, double iamb are harmoniously blended together by an unconscious master of quantitative rhythm. It can be at once and easily established, by multiplying instances, that the daily talk and writing of English-speaking peoples, though not by any means always poetry, is still, in spite of itself and by an unfelt compulsion, always rhythmic and always quantitative in its rhythm.

If we take similarly passages from literary prose, we shall find the same law of rhythm lifted to a higher level. Shakespeare and the Bible will give us the best and most concentrated examples of this rhythm in prose. Our first quotation, from the New Testament, can indeed be arranged, omitting the superfluous word 'even' before 'Solomon,' as a very perfect and harmonious stanza of free quantitative verse.

Cōnsidēr | thē liliēs | ōf thē fiēld | hōw thēy grōw, |  
Thēy toil nōt | nēithēr dō | thēy spīn, |  
Yēt I | sây ūntō yoŭ | thāt Sōlōmōn | in āll hīs | glōrý |  
Wās nōt ārrāyēd | likē ūntō | ōne ōf thēse. |

Or again, let us take the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount,

Blēssēd āre | thē pōor | in spīrit; | fōr theirs is | thē kīngdōm | ōf heāven. |  
Blēssēd āre | thēy thāt mōurn; | fōr thēy shāl bē | cōmfōrtēd. |  
Blēssēd āre | thē meek; | fōr thēy shāl | inhērīt | thē ēārth. |  
Blēssēd āre | thē mērcifŭl; | fōr thēy shāl | ōbtain mērcý. |  
Blēssēd āre | thē pŭre in heārt; | fōr thēy shāl sēē | Gōd. |

Or from St. Paul,—

Thōugh I spēāk | wīth thē tōngues | ōf mēn | ānd ōf āngēls | ānd hāve  
nōt | chārītý, |  
I ām bēcōme | ās sōundīng brāss | ōr ā tīnkling | cýmbāl |  
Ānd thōugh I hāve | thē gīft | ōf prōphēcý |  
ānd ūndĕrstānd | āll mýstĕrĭes | ānd āll knōwlēdge, |  
ānd thōugh I hāve | āll faīth | sō thāt I cōuld | rēmōve mōūntāins, |  
ānd hāve | nōt chārītý | I ām nōthīng. |

If we take Shakespeare's prose in a well-known passage, we shall find the same law of quantitative rhythm automatically arranging his word-movement—

This gōōdlý frāme, | thē ēārth, sēēms tō | mē ā stērile |  
prōmōntōrý; | thīs mōst ēxcēl | lēnt cānōpý, | thē āir,  
lōōk yoŭ, | thīs brāve o'ēr | hānglīng fīrmāmēnt, | thīs  
mā | jēstī | cāl rōōf frēttēd | wīth gōldēn fire, | —whý, it āppeārs | tō mē

nō ōth|ēr thing thăn ă | foūl ānd pēstī|lēnt cōngrēgā|tiōn ōf  
 vāpōūrs. | Whāt ă piēce ōf | wōrk is ă măn! | Hōw nōblē in |  
 reāson, | hōw infīnite | in fācūltȳ! | in fōrm, | in  
 mōving | hōw ěxprēss ānd | ādmīrāble! | in āctiōn hōw | like  
 ān āngēl! | in āpprēhēsiōn | hōw like ă gōd! | thē beaūtȳ ōf |  
 thē wōrld! | thē pārāgōn | ōf ānīmāls. And yēt, tō mē, |  
 whāt is thīs quīnt|ēssēnce ōf dūst? |

The measures of this prose rhythm find their units of order in word-groups and not as in poetry in metrical lines; the syllabic combinations which we call feet do not follow here any fixed sequence. In colloquial speech the sequence is arranged by impulse of Nature or by the automatic play of the subconscious mind, in prose either by the instinctive or by the conscious action of an inner ear, by a secret and subtle hearing in our subliminal parts. There is not an arrangement of feet previously set by the mind and fixedly recurrent as in metre. But still the measures of speech are the same and in all these prose passages there is a dominant rhythm,—even sometimes a free recurrence or dominance of certain measures, not laid down or fixed, but easy and natural,—which gives an underlying unity to the whole passage. In the instance taken from Shakespeare a remarkable persistence of four-foot measures, with occasional shorter ones intervening, builds up a grave and massive rhythmic feeling and imparts even a poetic motion to the unified whole.

In free verse the difference of prose movement and poetic rhythm tends to disappear; poetry steps down to or towards the level of rhythmic, sometimes a very poorly rhythmic prose; but it is too often a rhythm which misses its aim at the ear and is not evident though it may exist incommunicably somewhere in the mind of the writer. That indeed is the general modernistic tendency—to step back to the level of prose, sometimes to the colloquial level, both in language and in sound movement; the tendency, the aim even, is to throw away the intensities of poetic rhythm and poetic language and approximate to a prose intonation and to a prose diction; one intensity only is kept in view and that too not always, the intensity of the thought substance. It is the thought substance that is expected to determine its own sound harmonies—as in prose: the thought must not subject itself to a pre-

conceived or set rhythm, it must be free from the metrical strait-waistcoat; or else the metrical mould must be sufficiently irregular, capricious, easily modifiable to give a new freedom and ease of movement to the thought substance.

Our immediate concern, however, is with quantitative metre constructed on the principle of quantity,—though free verse also on that basis has to be taken into consideration as a subordinate possibility. After all, the swing against metre has not justified itself; it goes contrary to a very profound law of speech, contradicts a very strong need of the ear, and the metreless verse it prefers disappoints, by the frequent flatness and inequality which seems natural to it at its ordinary level, the listening consciousness. All creation proceeds on a basis of oneness and sameness with a superstructure of diversity, and there is the highest creation where is the intensest power of basic unity and sameness and on that supporting basis the intensest power of appropriate and governed diversity. In poetic speech metre gives us this intensest power of basic unity and sameness—rhythmic variation gives us this intensest power of expressive diversity. Metre was in the thought of the Vedic poets the reproduction in speech of great creative world-rhythms; it is not a mere formal construction, though it may be made by the mind into even such a lifeless form: but even that lifeless form or convention, when genius and inspiration breathe the force of life into it, becomes again what it was meant to be, it becomes itself and serves its own true and great purpose. There is an intonation of poetry which is different from the flatter and looser intonation of prose, and with it a heightened or gathered intensity of language, a deepened vibrating intensity of rhythm, an intense inspiration in the thought substance. One leaps up with this rhythmic spring or flies upon these wings of rhythmic exaltation to a higher scale of consciousness which expresses things common with an uncommon power both of vision and of utterance and things uncommon with their own native and revealing accent; it expresses them, as no mere prose speech can do, with a certain kind of deep appealing intimacy of truth which poetic rhythm alone gives to expressive form and power of language: the greater this element, the greater is the poetry. The essence of this power can be there without metre, but metre is its spontaneous form, raises it to its acme. The tradition of metre is not a vain and foolish convention followed by the great poets of the past in a primitive ignorance unconscious of their own bondage; it is in spite of its appearance of



human convention a law of Nature, an innermost mind-nature, a highest speech-nature.

But it does not immediately follow that the metrical application to poetry of the normal rhythm of the language, discoverable even in its colloquial speech and prose, is imperatively called for or that the construction of quantitative metres in that mould will be a needed or a right procedure. It might be reasoned, on the contrary, that precisely because this is a normal movement for colloquial speech and prose, it must be ill-fitted for poetry; poetic speech is supernormal, above the ordinary level, and its principle of rhythm should be other than that of common language. Moreover, it may be said, the admission of intrinsic rhythmic quantities to a share in determining the metrical basis would in practice only give us an accentual or stress metre with a slight difference, and the difference would be for the worse. For the function which quantity now serves in accentual verse as a powerful free element in the variation of the rhythm, would be sacrificed; quantitative verse would be bound to a rigid beat which would impose on it the character of a monotonous drone or would fix it in a shackled stiffness like the drumming of the early "decasyllabon" or that treadmill movement which has been charged, as an incurable defect, against the English hexameter.

But let us note, first, that there can be no idea of replacing altogether the normal accentual mould of English verse by a quantitative structure; the object can only be to introduce new rhythms which extend and vary the established achievement of English poetry, to create new moulds, to add a rich and possibly a very spacious modern wing to an old edifice. Even if the new forms are only an improvement on stress metre, a rhythm starting from the same swing of the language, that is no objection; it may still be worth doing if it brings in new tunes, other cadences, fresh subtleties of word-music. As for the objection of a tied-up monotony, caused by the disappearance of the free placing and variation of the pure quantitative elements in metrical rhythm, that need not be the consequence: there are other means of variation which are sufficient to dispel that peril. A free use of modulation, an avoidance of metrical rigidity by other devices natural to the flexibility of the English tongue, a skilful employment of overlapping (*enjambement*), of *cæsura*, of word-grouping are presupposed in any reasonable quantitative system. Even where a very regular movement is necessitated or desirable, the resources of the play of sound, a subtle

play of vowellation and of consonant harmonies, rhythmic undertones and overtones ought to cure the alleged deficiency. It is not the nature of the material but the unskilful hand that creates the flaw; for each kind of material has its own limitations and its own possibilities, and the hand of the craftsman is needed to restrict or overcome the limitations, even to take advantage of the natural bounds and bring out the full force of the latent creativeness concealed in the obstructing matter.

The application of the quantitative principle and the discovery of the forms that are possible are the task of the creator, not of the theoretical critic. It is, first and foremost, English quantitative forms that we have to create; the reproduction or new-creation of classical metres in English speech is only a side issue. Here the possibilities are endless, but they fall into two or three categories. First, there can be fixed quantitative metres repeated from line to line without variation except for such modulations as are, in the form chosen, possible or desirable. Secondly, stanza forms can be found, either analogous to those used in accentual verse or else analogous to the Greek arrangement in strophe and antistrophe. Thirdly, one can use a freer quantitative verse in which each line has its own appropriate movement, the feet being variable, but with a predominant single rhythm unifying the whole. Lastly, there can be entirely free quantitative verse, true verse with a poetic rhythm, but not bound by any law of metre. The stanza form is the most suitable to quantitative verse, for here there can be much variety and the danger of rigidity or monotony is non-existent. The use of set stanza metres simple or composite is less obligatory than it was in classical verse; even, each poem can discover its own metrical stanza form most in consonance with its own thought and feeling. The fixed metre unchanging from line to line needs greater skill; modulation is here of great importance. A semi-free quantitative verse also gives considerable scope; it can be planned in a form resembling that of the Greek chorus but without the fixed balance of strophe and antistrophe, or a still looser use can be made of it escaping towards the freedom of modernistic verse. There are in this collection of poems examples of the first two methods, the fixed metre and the set stanza or the strophe and antistrophe arrangement; a few more, illustrative of these and other forms, are added at the end of this appendix. There is one illustration of semi-free and one of free quantitative verse.

And unconsciously quantitative free verse may be said to exist already in the writings of Whitman and contemporary modernist poets.

In modern free verse the underlying impulse is to get away from the fixed limitations of accentual metre, its set forms and its traditional "poetic" language, and to create forms and a diction more kin to the natural rhythm and turns of the language which we find in common speech and in prose. To throw away the bonds of metre altogether, to approximate not only in the language but in the rhythmic movement to normal speech and to prose tone and prose expression was the method first preferred; a great deal of free verse is nothing but prose cut up into lines to make it look like verse. But in the more skilful treatment by the greater writers there is a labour to arrive at a certain power of rhythm and a sufficient unity of movement. Free verse cannot justify itself unless it makes a thing of beauty of every line and achieves at the same time an underlying rhythmic oneness; this is imperative when the power for form and the uplifting intensity of metrical verse is absent, if this kind of writing is not to be, as it too often is, a failure. In the best poetry of the kind the attempt to achieve this end arrives precisely at a form of free quantitative verse based on the natural rhythm of the language liberated from all metrical convention of regularity, and there is sometimes an approximation to its highest possibilities. But the approximation is not so near as it might have been in the work of one who had the theory before him; for it was not the conscious mind, but the creative ear that was active and compelled this result, helped no doubt by the will to outdo the beauty of accentual metrical rhythm in a freer poetry.

In Whitman the attempt at perfection of rhythm is often present and, when he does his best as a rhythmist, it rises to a high-strung acuteness which gives a great beauty of movement to his finest lines; but what he arrives at is a true quantitative free verse.

Gōmc, | lōvelŷ ānd | soōthīng | deāth, |  
 Ūndŭlāte | rōund thē wōrld, | sērēnclŷ | ārrīving, | ārrīving, |  
 In thē dāy, | in thē nīght, | tō āll, | tō eāch |  
 Soōnēr ōr | lātēr, | dēlicāte | deāth. | . . .  
 Approāch, | strōng dē | livērēss, |  
 Whēn it is sō, | whēn thou hāst | tākēn thēm | I jōyoŭsly | sīng thē deād, |  
 Lōst in thē | dīving | floātīng | ōceān ōf thē, |  
 Lāved in thē | floōd ōf thŷ | blīss, Ō deāth, | . . .

And the sights | of the open | landscape | and the high-spread | sky are  
fitting |

And life | and the fields | and the huge and | thoughtful night |

That is comparatively rare in its high beauty ; but everywhere the rhythmic trend is the same wherever we look at it,—as in the rhymed freedom of this opening,—

Weapon | shapelŷ, | naked, | wan, |  
Head from the | mother's | bowels | drawn, |  
Wooded | flesh and | metal bone, | limb | only one | and lip | only one, |  
Grey-blue | leaf by | red-heat | grown, | helve produced | from a little |  
seed sown, |  
Resting the | grass amid | and upon, |  
To be leaned | and to lean on. |

Even when he loosens into a laxity nearer to prose, the compact quantitative movement, though much less high-strung, is still there,—

I see | male and | female | everywhere, |  
I see | the serene | brotherhood | of philosophers, |  
I see the | constructiveness | of my race |

It is only when he lies back or lolls indolently content with spreading himself out in a democratic averageness of rhythm that the intensity of poetic movement fades out ; but the free quantitative movement is there even then, though near now to the manner and quality of prose.

The later practitioners of free verse have not often the heightened rhythmic movement of Whitman at his best, but still they are striving towards the same kind of thing, and their work apparently and deliberately amorphous receives something like a shape, a balance, a reasoned meaning when scanned as quantitative free verse. We find this in passages of the *Waste Land*, e.g.

We are the | hollow men |  
We are the | stuffed men |  
Leaning to | gether |  
Headpiece | filled with straw. | Alas ! |

Oūr driēd | voices, whēn |  
 Wē whispēr | tōgūthēr, |  
 Āre quiēt | ānd meānīnglēss |  
 Ās wīnd | īn drȳ grāss |  
 Ōr rāts' fēēt | ōvēr | brōkēn glāss |  
 Īn oūr drȳ | cēllār, |  
  
 Shāpe withōūt fōrm, | shāde withōūt | cōloūr, |  
 Pārālȳsed fōrce, | gēstūre withōūt mōtiōn ; |

Or let us take a passage from Stephen Spender,—

Ōh cōmrādes, | lēt nōt thōse | whō fōllōw | āftēr |  
 —Thē beaūtīfūl | gēnērātiōn | thāt shālł sprīng frōm | oūr sīdes— |  
 Lēt nōt thēm | wōndēr | hōw āftēr | thē failūre ōf | bānks |  
 Thē failūre | ōf cāthēdrāls | ānd thē dēclāred | īnsānītȳ | ōf oūr rūlērs, |  
 Wē lācked | thē sprīng-like | rēsōūrcēs | ōf thē tigēr |  
 Ōr ōf plānts | whō strike ōūt | nēw rōōts tō | gūshīng wātērs. |  
 Būt thrōugh | thē tōrn dōwn | pōrtiōns ōf | ōld fābrīc | lēt thēir ēyes |  
 Wātch thē ād|mīrīng dāwn | ēxpłōde | līke ā shēll |  
 Ārōūd ūs, | dāzīng ūs | with īts līght | līke snōw. |

There is a rhythm there, but it is not sufficiently gathered up or vivid and it is much more subdued than Eliot's towards the atony and flatness of ordinary prose rhythm. The last lines of the quotation from *Waste Land* could be used to describe with a painful accuracy most of this ametric poetry. Some kind of poetic force is there but no realised and convincing form; shade there is plenty, but colour—except perhaps blacks, browns, greys and silver-greys—is mostly absent; force is there but paralysed or only half-carrying out its intention, gestures with much effort and straining, but no successful motion. In less excellent passages of the free verse writers this atony comes out verily evidently; all intensity of poetic rhythm disappears and we plod through arid waste-lands. There is an insistence on formlessness as

the basis and each writer tries to shape his own rhythm out of this arrhythmic amorphousness, sometimes with a half success, but not always or very often. This is clearly the reason of the failure of free verse and the reason too of several besetting general deficiencies of modernist verse; for even where there is form or metre, it seems ashamed of itself and tries to look as if there were none. It is the reason also of the discouraging inequality of modernist poetry, its failure to achieve any supreme beauty or greatness, any outstanding work which could compare with the masterpieces of other epochs. Inspiration is the source of poetic intensity and, while inspiration comes when it will and not at command, yet it is more tempted to come and can be more sustained when there is a conscious and constant form to receive it,—not necessarily metre in the received sense,—and although the highest breath of inspiration cannot, even so, be continuous, for the human mind is too frail to sustain the supernatural luminous inrush, yet the form sustains quality, keeps it at a higher level than can any license of caprice or freedom of shapelessness. When the form is not there the inspiration, the intensity that gives perfect poetic expression to idea, feeling or vision, keeps more at a distance and has to be dragged in with an effort; its impulse, even if it comes in lines, phrases, passages, afterwards ceases or flags and toils and through long weary pages one feels its persistent absence or unwilling half-presence and the mass of the work remains unsatisfying. What is done may be strong or interesting in substance, but it lacks the immortal shape. Mind is there, a fertile and forceful, sometimes too acute and forceful intelligence, but not life, not a firm lasting body. It is possible that one day the impulse which created free verse may be justified; but, if so, it can only be done when a free form is achieved, a free rhythmic unity. For that end the best work of Whitman would seem to point to a free but finely built quantitative rhythm as the most promising base. But, even at its highest, free verse is not likely to replace metre.

### The Problem of the Hexameter

It is now possible to transfer our attention to the minor problem of the naturalisation of classical quantitative metres in English poetry; for in the light of this more natural theory of quantity we can hope to find an easier solution. Among these metres the hexameter stands as the central knot of the problem; if that is loosened, the rest follows. But first let us

return on past attempts and their failure and find by that study a basis of comparison between the true and the false hexameter. There are here two elements to be considered, the metrical form and the characteristic rhythm; both Clough and Longfellow have failed for the most part to get into their form the true metrical movement and missed too by that failure to get the true inner rhythm, the something more that is the soul of the hexameter. Of the two, Longfellow achieved the smoother half-success—or rather the more plausible failure. He realised that the metre must be predominantly dactylic and maintained a smooth dactylic flow, broken only by the false, because mechanical, use of trochees to vary the continuous dactylic beat. Other modulations could not be used with effect because the accentual system only admits in the hexameter the dactyl, the spondee and the trochee. For all three-syllabled feet are in the accentual hexameter reduced to dactyls. The tribrach gets right of entry by imposing an accentual low pitch on its inherently unaccented and unstressed first syllable, *e.g.*,

And with the | others in haste went hurrying down to the sea-shore.

The anapaest is cooked up into a pseudo-dactyl by a similar device of false accentuation and by the belittling of its long vowel, the bacchius and cretic by a depression or half suppression of the value of the unstressed long syllable, the second long bar that gives them their musical value; the molossus is shorn of its strength by a similar treatment of all its syllables except the opening long sound. All are disabled from coming out in relief on the dactylic background and so cannot do their work as modulating variants; for that they should enter in their own right as themselves and not as false dactyls and with their full metrical value. Even among the three available feet the trochee gives poor service; for it rarely fits in,—its effect, when it is used mechanically as a device and with no meaningful appropriateness or rhythmic beauty, disturbs the dactylic flow without giving any relief to the dactylic monotone. Dactyl and spondee by themselves, pure and unmodulated, or the dactyl by itself cannot, unhelpt and unrelieved, bear successfully the burden of a long poem in accentual metre.

Longfellow treats us to a non-stop flow of even hexameters with few overlappings and insufficient use of pauses; such overlappings as there are are hardly noticeable, so mechanical is their intervention, so entirely uncalled by rhythmic necessity and unburdened with meaning; the pauses are sometimes well-done but the whole tone of the rhythm is so mechanical that even then they lose their effect and seem almost arti-

ficial. The result on the rhythmic whole is disastrous; a smooth even sing-song is the constant note, a movement without nobility or beauty or power or swiftness. Sometimes we come across passages that are adequate and achieve a quiet and subdued beauty—

Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light, and the landscape  
Lay as if new-created in all the freshness of childhood.

Peace seemed to reign upon earth and the restless heart of the ocean

Was for a moment consoled. All sounds were in harmony blended.

In such passages, the metre, though accentual, satisfies quantitative demand and so escapes from its deficiencies, but the rhythm is too flatly smooth and still indistinctive; it fails to support and achieve fully by the something more behind the metrical movement the beauty that the words intended,—some charm of delicacy is achieved, but it lacks power, height and depth; here certainly is not the tread of the great Olympian measure. Ordinarily, the note sinks lower and even descends to a very low pitch; we hear, not the roll of the hexameter, but some six-foot dactylic rhythm resembling a sort of measured prose recitative—

Then he arose from his bed and heard what the people were saying,

Joined in the talk at the door with Stephen and Richard and Gilbert,

Joined in the morning prayer and in the reading\* of Scripture.

And yet even the accentual (or perhaps one should say the stress) hexameter is capable of better things. Clough, aiming at this stronger efficiency, tries to escape from the treadmill motion, the sing-song, the monotone; but he does not altogether get away from it and arrives only at a familiar vigour or a capable but undistinguished movement, or falls into a trotting and stumbling rhythm which is sometimes hardly even a rhythm. In attempting to shun the monotony of the unuplifted dactylic beat, he often totally overlays or half overlays the metrical basis of the hexameter rhythm which must be always a sustained dactylic movement. He perpetrates frequently lines that are wholly trochaic and have only this in common with the hexameter that they walk on six feet; a host of other lines are, if not wholly, yet predominantly trochaic. This, which can sometimes be done in a true hexameter rhythm with a special intonation and a special purpose, is fatal if constantly used as an ordinary action of

\*Note the detestable combination of two flat trochees with a falsified tribrach in the middle of this line. These false movements abound in the accentual hexameter.



a machine. Very often the trochees break a line that would otherwise have been adequate; sometimes there is what seems to be a cross between hexameter and pentameter; often he indulges in an anapestic line, sometimes three at a time, disguised as hexameters by turning an initial pyrrhic into a false trochee. The result tends to be tedious, trivial and disappointing; let us take a sample—

So they bathed, they read, they roamed in glen and forest  
 Far amid blackest pines to the waterfalls they shadow  
 Far up the long long glens to the loch and the loch behind it  
 Deep under huge red cliffs, a secret, and oft by the starlight  
 Òr thē aūr|ōrā, pēr|chānce, rācīng| hōme tō thē | cīght-ō-clōck |  
mūttōn\* ; |

So they bathed and read and roamed in heathery Highland.  
 This indistinctive paddling has even less of the sound and rhythm of the true hexameter than Longfellow's verses which are at least hexametric in form and surface appearance.

But still there are passages, not numerous enough, in which he loses his fear of the pure dactylic movement and does not replace it or break it with the disturbing intrusion of unmanaged or unassimilated trochees; he arrives then at "accentual" lines,—if they must be so called, but they are really stress lines,—with a firm beat that makes the metrical structure adequate; or he achieves a movement in which the trochees come in with a distinct rhythmic meaning and significant effect or, at the least, make themselves at home in the dactylic rhythm, or he brings in other modulations in a way proper to the quantitative hexameter—

Found amid granite dust on the frosty scalp of the Cairngorm. . . . .  
 Eying one moment the beauty, the life, ere he flung himself in it,  
 Drinking in, deep in his soul, the beautiful hue and the clearness . . . .  
 Often I find myself saying and know not myself as I say it,  
 Perish the poor and the weary! what can they better than perish,  
 Perish in labour for her who is worth the destruction of empires . . . .  
 Dig in thy deep dark prison, O miner! and finding be thankful,  
 While thou ārt | ēāting blāck | breād īn thē | pōisōnoūs | āir ōf thȳ |  
cāvērn, |

Far away glitters the gem on the peerless neck of a princēss . . . . .  
 Into a granite bason the amber torrent descended.

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\*Note that this, the sole truly dactylic line, with quantitative modulations, is in spite of its deliberate prosaism less unsatisfactory in sound than the rest of the passage.

These lines are metrically and rhythmically adequate; the treatment of the metre is unexceptionable: there is a true form, a good basis and beginning of a genuine hexameter movement; and yet something is lacking, something which ought to be there and is not, and its absence prevents them from being quite effective. It is the rhythm that in spite of its soundness is not altogether alive, does not keep sufficiently alert, has not found the true movement that would give it the full power and speed of the true hexameter. A second fault is that while individual lines are good and many sound even excellent when read by themselves or even two or three at a time, there is no rhythmic harmony of the long passage or paragraph; one has, in the mass, the sense of listening to the same indifferent and undistinguished movement repeated without sufficient meaningful variation and without any harmonious total significance. Above all the large hexameter rhythm, such as we have it in Greek or Latin, has not been found, nor anything that would equal it as a native English harmony fitted for great poetic speech, for great thoughts and feelings, for great action and movement. There is a tameness of sound, a flatness of level, or, even when beauty or energy is there, it is a tenuous beauty, a strength that is content to be low-toned and moderate.

One reason of this deficiency must be that in all this work the hexameter is compelled to express subjects whose triviality brings it down far below its natural pitch of greatness, force or beauty. A pathetically sentimental love story, a rather dull-hued tale of courtship among New England Puritans, the trifling doings and amours and chaff and chat of holiday-making undergraduates, these are not subjects in which either language or rhythm can rise to any great heights or reach out into revealing largenesses; they are obliged to key themselves to commonness and flatness: the language is as often as not confidentially familiar or prosaic, a manner good enough for some other kinds of verse but not entitled to call in the power of the great classical metre. There can be in such an atmosphere no room and no courage to dare to rise into any uplifting grandeur or break out into any extreme of beauty. Both Clough and Longfellow tell their stories well and it is more for the interest of the contents than for the beauty of the poetry that we read them. But the hexameter was made for nobler purposes; it has been the medium of epic or pastoral or it tuned itself to a powerful or forcefully pointed expression of thought and observation; power and beauty are its native character and, even when it turns to satire or to familiar speech, it keeps always one or other or both of these characteristics. There is no sound reason

why it should be otherwise in English, why this great metre should be condemned to an inferior level and inferior purpose; if that is done, it fails its user and dissatisfies the reader.

In fact, Clough does once or twice rise above these limitations. Here, following immediately three lines that have been already quoted as good in their limits, come three others that suddenly realise the true hexameter rhythm; there is the life and energy natural to that rhythm, there is the characteristic swiftness, rush, force, which is one of its notes, there is an exact clothing of the thought, feeling or action in its own native movement—

What! for a mite, or a mote, an impalpable odour of honour  
Armies shall bleed, cities burn, and the soldier red from the storming  
Carry hot rancour and lust into chambers of mothers and daughters!

At another place he rises still higher and suddenly discovers, though only once in a way and apparently without being conscious of his find, the rhythm of the true quantitative hexameter—

Hē like ā | gōd cāme | leāving hīs | āmplē Ōlȳmpīān | chāmbēr  
where the opening bacchius and spondee followed by bounding and undulating dactyls give a sound-value recognisable as akin to the ancient movement. It would be an epic line if it were not in the mock-heroic style; but, even so, if we met it apart from its context, it would remind us at once of the Homeric rhythms—

Bē de kat' Oulumpoio karēnōn chōōmenos kēr. . . . .

If all the poem had been written in that manner or in accordant rhythms, the problem of the English hexameter would have been solved; there would have been no failure or half failure.\*

We begin to glimpse the conditions of success and may now summarily state them. The hexameter is a dactylic metre and it must remain unequivocally and patently dactylic; there can be no escape from its difficulties by diminishing the dactylic beat: rather its full quantitative force has to be brought out,—the more that is done, the more the true rhythm

\*Kingsley's "Andromeda" deserves a mention, for it is the most readable of English hexameter poems; the verse is well-constructed, much better than Clough's; it has not the sing-song tameness of Longfellow, there is rhythm, there is resonance. But though the frame is correct and very presentable, there is nothing or little inside it. Kingsley has the trick of romantic language, romantic imagination and thinking, but he is not an original poet; the poetic value of his work is far inferior to Clough's or Longfellow's, it is not sound and good stuff but romantic tinsel.

will appear. But this need not bring in any sing-song, treadmill walk or monotone. In Longfellow, in Clough at their ordinary level, it is the low even tone without relief, the repetition of a semi-trochaic jog-trot or a smooth unvarying canter, the beat of tame dactyls, that gives this impression. In Harvey or similar writers it is the constrained artificial treatment of the metre that enforces a treadmill labour. But this is not the true hexameter movement; the true movement is a swift stream or a large flow, an undulating run, the impetuous bounding of a torrent, an ocean surge or a divine gallop of the horses of the sungod. There must be one underlying sameness as in all metre, but there can and should be at the same time a considerable diversity on the surface. That can be secured by several means, each of which gives plenty of room for rhythmic subtlety and for many turns of sound significance. There is the pause in various places of the line, near the beginning, at the middle or just after it or close to the end; all admit of a considerable variety in the exact placing, modulation, combination of the pause or pauses. There is also the line cæsure and the foot cæsure. The hexameter line in English may be cut into two or else three equal dactylic parts, or it may be cut anywhere in the middle of a foot and this admits of a number of very effective variations which obviate monotony altogether. For example—

In the dawn-ray lofty and voiceless

Ida climbed with her god-haunted peaks | into diamond lustres,  
 Ida, first of the hills | with the ranges silent beyond her  
 Watching the dawn in their giant companies, | as since the ages  
 First began | they had watched her, | upbearing Time on their summits....

“Hero Æneas, swift be thy stride to the Ilian hill-top.

Dardanid, haste. For the gods are at work ; they have risen with  
the morning,  
 Each from his starry couch, and they labour. Doom, we can see it,  
 Glows on their anvils of destiny ; clang we can hear of their hammers.  
 Something they forge for us, sitting unknown in the silence eternal,  
 Whether of evil or good it is they who shall choose, who are masters  
 Calm, unopposed ; they are gods and they work out their iron caprices.  
 Troy is their stage and Argos their background, we are their puppets.  
 Always our voices are prompted to speech for an end that we know not,

Always we think that we drive, but are driven ; action and impulse,  
 Yearning and thought are their engines, our will is their shadow and  
 helper."

There are many other devices for variation: there is overlapping,—but it must be skilfully managed so as to coincide with perceptible movements of the thought, not used merely as a customary technical device;—there is the constant attention to the right vowelisation and consonant harmonies which can give an individual character to each line and are also intimately connected with the rhythmic rendering of significance. Even though the free rhythmic placing of intrinsic long syllables is taken away, since they are now bound down to a metrical use, still much can be done with the distribution of stressed long vowels and stressed short vowels among the six beats; for the predominance of either in a line or passage or their more or less equal distribution in various ways creates different psychologies of sound and dictates large or wide or narrow or subtle motions of both rhythm and feeling. In this opening of a poem—

Dawn in her journey eternal compelling the labour of mortals,  
 Dawn the beginner of things with the night for their rest or their ending,  
 Pallid and bright-lipped arrived from the mists and the chill of the  
 Euxine—

in the first line the stressed long vowels predominate, in the second the stressed short vowels, in the third there is an equal distribution; in each case there is a suiting of the choices of sound to a different shade of movement-sense. In another passage—

Doffing his mantle  
 Started to run at the bidding a swift-footed youth of the Trojans,  
 First in the race and the battle Thrasymachus son of Aretes,

we can see that the predominance of short stresses amounting to an almost unbroken succession of natural short-vowel syllables creates a long running swiftness of the rhythm which fits in exactly with the action. All these minutiae are part of the technique and the possibilities of the hexameter and, if they are neglected or ineffectively used, the fault does not lie with the metre. The natural resources of the true quantitative hexameter are so great that even a long series of end-stopped lines would not necessarily create a monotone.

Finally, there is the resource of modulation, and in the quantitative hexameter this can be used with great effect, either sparingly or in abund-

ance, best sparing perhaps in epic or high narrative, abundant in poems of complex thinking and emotion. There is only one possible modulation in place of the spondee and that is the trochee. In the quantitative hexameter the trochee, unless unskilfully used, does not break or hurt the flow; it modifies the total rhythm so as to give it an expressive turn and it can easily make itself a part of the general dactylic streaming. For example—

High over all that a nation has built and its love and its laughter,  
 Lighting a last time homestead and highway, temple and market,  
 Looking on men who must | diē ānd | wōmēn | destined to sorrow,  
 Looking on | beaūty | fire mūst lāy | low and the sickle of slaughter

Here the two trochees together—a combination almost always awkward or crippling in the accentual hexameter—and the trochee followed by a cretic fit easily into the movement and create by their unusual and appropriate turn of sound a modulation of the rhythmic feeling. If the third line were written—

Looking on men who must die and on women predestined to sorrow, the common indistinguishable metrical run would not at all serve the intended meaning,—it would be a statement and would inform the mind but, robbed of the special turn of sound, it would not move. For the dactyl there is a great number of possible modulations; the bacchius can be used freely, the lighter cretic less freely but still frequently, the first pæon often but not too often; even the lighter molossus can come in to our aid; the tribrach or the anapæst can introduce the first foot of a line or step in after a pause in the middle, but elsewhere they can seldom intervene or only if it is done very carefully. Even the choriamb or the double trochee can be employed in place of the pæon, if the second long syllable of the foot is unstressed and therefore not burdensome. Heavy trisyllables can be allowed only now and then, if the movement demands them. But in fact all modulations must be employed only when there is the rhythmic necessity or for rhythmic significance; if they are used mechanically without reason or at random, it does not help the harmony and often destroys it. Rhythmic necessity intervenes when the special movement needed by the thought, feeling or action must so be brought about, by a modulation of the fixed rhythm or a departure from it; \* rhythmic significance

\*Thus even an almost wholly trochaic or a wholly spondaic line can be admitted when it is demanded by the action, e.g.,

He from the carven couch upreared his giant stature

or,

Fate-weighed up Troy's slope strode musing strong Æneas.

occurs when the deeper unexpressed soul sense behind the words is brought out, not by word but by sound, to the surface.

The efficacy of this technique depends on the power of the writer to discover and sustain the true movement of the hexameter, its spirit and character, such as we find it in the ancient epics, pastorals, epistles, satires in which it was used with a supreme greatness or a consummate mastery. That movement can be of many kinds; it admits a considerable variation of pace, sometimes swift, sometimes slow, short in its rapidity or long-drawn-out with many rhythmic turns, and there are several possibilities in each kind. Only a considerable poetic genius could bring out the full power and subtleties of its rhythms; but it is essential for even a tolerable success to find and keep up a true length and pitch in the delivery of the lines; the dactylic flow is especially exacting in this respect on the care of the rhythmist. An undulant run is the easiest to maintain, the most simple and natural pace, but it has to be varied by other movements, a long or a brief bounding swiftness, the light rapid run or a slower deliberate running; a large even stream is a second possibility as a basic rhythm, but this needs a Virgilian genius or talent; the surge is the greatest of all, but only the born epic poet could sustain it for a long time,—it suits indeed only the epic or high-pitched narrative, but it can come in from time to time as an occasional high rise from a lower level of rhythmic plenitude. Finally, rhyme can be used for poems of reflective thought or lyrical feeling; but it must not be made the excuse for a melodic monotone. That kind of melodic fixity is permissible in very short dactylic pieces, but the hexameter does not move at ease in a short range: it has fluted in the pastoral grove and walked on the Appian way, but it loves better the free sky and the winds of the ocean; it finds its natural self in the wide plain, on high mountains or in the surge and roll of a long venturous voyage.

If the difficulty of the hexameter can be successfully overcome, no insuperable impossibility need be met in the naturalisation of other classical metres, for the harmonic principle will be the same. All that is necessary is that artificial quantity and the atmosphere of a pastime or an experiment must be abandoned; there must not be the sense of an importation or a construction, the metre must read as if it were a born English rhythm, not a naturalised alien. It would be a mistake to cling to rigid scholarly correctness in the process; these metres must submit to the natural law of English poetry, to movements and liberties which the classical rhythms do not admit, to modulation, to slight facilitating changes of

form, to the creation of different models of itself, as there are different models of the sonnet. The Alcaic is the most attractive and manageable of the ancient lyrical metres, but in English even the Alcaic cannot easily be the same in all respects as the original verse form of its creator. The original model can indeed be reproduced; but modulations have to be brought in to help the difficulties experienced by English speech in taking a foreign metre into itself; trochees have very usually to be substituted for the not easily found spondee, an occasional anapæst, a pæon lengthening out the orthodox dactyl should not be excluded; the omission of the first syllable in the opening line of the stanza can be admitted as an occasional license. Otherwise the full harmonic possibilities of this rhythmic measure in its new tongue cannot be richly exploited. The Horatian form in which the two opening lines very commonly end in a cretic doing duty for the theoretic dactyl, is more manageable in English in which a constant dactylic close to the line is not easily handled: this change gives a less melodious, a graver and more sculptural turn to the outlines of the stanza. Finally, to this Horatian form it is possible to give a greater amplitude by admitting a feminine ending in these two lines, the cretic turning into a double trochee. That does not break or destroy the spirit and character of the Alcaic verse; it gives it more largeness and resonance.

Other lyrical forms may be less amenable to change; there is sometimes too close an identity between the body and the spirit. It is so with the Sapphic, an alluring metre but, as experimenters have found, difficult to change and anglicise: here only slight modulations are admissible, the trochee for the spondee, the bacchius or light cretic for the dactyl. Still others would need the minute and scrupulous art of a goldsmith or the force of a giant to make anything of them; yet they are worth trying, for one never knows whether the difficulty may not be the way to a triumph or a *trouvaille*. In any case, the hexameter, half a dozen of the greater or more beautiful lyrical forms and the freedom of the use of quantitative verse for the creation of new original rhythms would be enough to add a wide field to the large and opulent estate of English poetry.



# Poems

## [ In Quantitative Metres ]

### OCEAN ONENESS <sup>1</sup>

Silence is round me, wideness ineffable;  
White birds on the ocean diving and wandering;  
    A soundless sea on a voiceless heaven,  
    Azure on azure, is mutely gazing.

Identified with silence and boundlessness  
My spirit widens clasping the universe  
    Till all that seemed becomes the Real,  
    One in a mighty and single vastness.

Someone broods there nameless and bodiless,  
Conscious and lonely, deathless and infinite,  
    And, sole in a still eternal rapture,  
    Gathers all things to his heart for ever.

1. Alcaics. Modulations are allowed, trochee or iamb in the first foot or a long monosyllable; an occasional anapaest in place of an iamb is permitted; a bacchius can replace a dactyl.



FLAME-WIND <sup>3</sup>

A flame-wind ran from the gold of the east,  
Leaped on my soul with the breath of a sevenfold noon.  
Wings of the angel, gallop of the beast!  
Mind and body on fire, but the heart in swoon.

O flame, thou bringest the strength of the noon,  
But where are the voices of morn and the stillness of eve?  
Where the pale-blue wine of the moon?  
Mind and life are in flower, but the heart must grieve.

Gold in the mind and the life-flame's red  
Make of the heavens a splendour, the earth a blaze,  
But the white and rose of the heart are dead.  
Flame-wind, pass! I will wait for Love in the silent ways.

3. Dactylic tetrameter and pentameter catalectic; an additional foot in the last line; trochee or spondee freely admitted anywhere; first pæon, bacchius, cretic can replace a dactyl. One or two extra syllables are allowed sometimes at the beginning of the line.



# JOURNEY'S END <sup>5</sup>

The day ends lost in a stretch of even,  
 A long road trod—and the little farther.  
 Now the waste-land, now the silence;  
 A blank dark wall, and behind it heaven.

# THE DREAM BOAT <sup>6</sup>

Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire,  
 With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?  
 Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur,  
 "Do you come now? is the heart's fire ready?"

Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered,  
 It recalled all that the life's joy cherished,  
 Imaged the felicity it must leave lost for ever,  
 And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.

Now within the hollowness of the world's breast inhabits—  
 For the love died and the old joy ended—  
 Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,  
 And the gold god and the dream boat come not.

5. Lines 1, 2, 4 epitrite, third pæon, trochee — — — / — — — / — — .

In line 3 two double trochees — — — / — — — /

6. Lines 1, 3 dactyl, second pæon, ionic a minore, amphibrach (or antibacchius)

— — — / — — — / — — — / — — —  
 — — — / — — —

Lines 2, 4 two ionics a minore with a closing trochee — — — / — — — / — — .

SOUL IN THE IGNORANCE <sup>7</sup>

Soul in the Ignorance, wake from its stupor.  
 Flake of the world-fire, spark of Divinity,  
 Lift up thy mind and thy heart into glory.  
 Sun in the darkness, recover thy lustre.

One, universal, ensphering creation,  
 Wheeling no more with inconscient Nature,  
 Feel thyself God-born, know thyself deathless.  
 Timeless return to thy immortal existence.

THE WITNESS AND THE WHEEL <sup>8</sup>

Who art thou in the heart comrade of man who sitst  
 August, watching his works, watching his joys and griefs,  
 Unmoved, careless of pain, careless of death and fate?  
 Witness, what hast thou seen watching this great blind world  
 Moving helpless in Time, whirled on the Wheel in Space,  
 That yet thou with thy vast Will biddest toil our hearts,  
 Mystic,—for without thee nothing can last in Time?  
 We too, when from the urge ceaseless of Nature turn  
 Our souls, far from the breast casting her tool, desire,  
 Grow like thee. In the front Nature still drives in vain  
 The blind trail of our acts, passions and thoughts and hopes;  
 Unmoved, calm, we look on, careless of death and fate,  
 Of grief careless and joy,—signs of a surface script  
 Without value or sense, steps of an aimless world.  
 Something watches behind, Spirit or Self or Soul,  
 Viewing Space and its toil, waiting the end of Time.  
 Witness, who then art thou, one with thee who am I,  
 Nameless, watching the Wheel whirl across Time and Space?

7. Dactylic tetrameter, usually catalectic, with the ordinary modulations.

8. The metre is the little Aschepiad used by Horace in his Ode addressed to Mæcenas, two choriambes between an initial spondee and a final iamb. Here modulations are admitted, trochee or iamb for the spondee, occasionally a spondee for the concluding iamb; an epitrite or ionic a minore can replace the choriamb.

DESCENT °

All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,  
Soul and body stir with a mighty rapture,  
Light and still more light like an ocean billows  
Over me, round me.

Rigid, stone-like, fixed like a hill or statue,  
Vast my body feels and upbears the world's weight;  
Dire the large descent of the Godhead enters  
Limbs that are mortal.

Voicless, thronged, infinity crowds upon me;  
Presses down a glory of power eternal;  
Mind and heart grow one with the cosmic wideness;  
Stilled are earth's murmurs.

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces  
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;  
Thoughts that left the ineffable's flaming mansions,  
Blaze in my spirit.

Slow the heart-beats rhythm like a giant hammer's;  
Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway  
Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,  
Ecstasy's chariots.

All the world is changed to a single oneness;  
Souls undying, infinite forces, meeting,  
Join in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,  
Rhythm of the Deathless.

Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,  
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal,—  
Light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom  
Clasping for ever.

---

9. Sapphics. But the second-foot spondee is very usually replaced by a trochee, the final trochee sometimes by a spondee; a bacchius, cretic or molossus can replace the dactyl. In the fifteenth line elision is used; in a Sapphic line there can be only one dactyl.





RENEWAL <sup>11</sup>

When the heart tires and the throb stills recalling  
 Things that were once and again can be never,  
 When the bow falls and the drawn string is broken,  
 Hands that were clasped, yet for ever are parted,

When the soul passes to new births and bodies,  
 Lands never seen and meetings with new faces,  
 Is the bow raised and the fall'n arrow fitted,  
 Acts that were vain rewedded to the Fate-curve?

To the lives sundered can Time bring rejoining,  
 Love that was slain be reborn with the body?  
 In the mind null, from the heart's chords rejected,  
 Lost to the sense, but the spirit remembers!

11. Lines 1, 3 two ionics a minore with a final amphibrach,  $\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup / \cup\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup /$   
 Lines 2, 4 choriamb, pæon, bacchius (or sometimes antibacchius or amphibrach),  $\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup / \cup\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup / \cup\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup / \cup\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup$

SOUL'S SCENE <sup>12</sup>

The clouds lain on forlorn spaces of sky, weary and lolling,  
 Watch grey waves of a lost sea wander sad, reckless and rolling,  
     A bare anguish of black beaches made mournful with the breath of  
                                                             the Northwind  
 And a huddle of melancholy hills in the distance.

The blank hour in some vast mood of a Soul lonely in Nature  
 On earth's face puts a mask pregnantly carved, cut to misfeature,  
     And man's heart and his stilled mind react hushed in a spiritual  
                                                             passion  
 Imitating the contours of her desolate waiting.

Impassible she waits long for the sun's gold and the azure,  
 The sea's song with its slow happy refrain's splashes of pleasure,—  
     As man's soul in its depths waits the outbreaking of the light and  
                                                             the godhead  
 And the bliss that God felt when he created his image.

12. Lines 1, 2 three antispasts (or in the first foot a second pæon), amphi-  
 brach, ~---~ / ~---~ / ~---~ / ~---~

Line 3 two antispasts, ionic a majore, second pæon, trochee  
 ~---~ / ~---~ / ~---~ / ~---~

Line 4 three pæons, trochee, but the middle pæon can be replaced by an  
 antispast or an ionic a majore; a double iamb once replaces the third pæon.

ASCENT<sup>13</sup>

(1)

*The Silence*

Into the Silence, into the Silence,  
Arise, O Spirit immortal,  
Away from the turning Wheel, breaking the magical Circle.  
Ascend, single and deathless:  
Care no more for the whispers and the shoutings in the darkness,  
Pass from the sphere of the grey and the little,  
Leaving the cry and the struggle,  
Into the Silence for ever.

Vast and immobile, formless and marvellous,  
Higher than Heaven, wider than the universe,  
In a pure glory of being,  
In a bright stillness of self-seeing,  
Communing with a boundlessness voiceless and intimate,  
Make thy knowledge too high for thought, thy joy too deep for emotion;  
At rest in the unchanging Light, mute with the wordless self-vision,  
Spirit, pass out of thyself; Soul, escape from the clutch of Nature.  
All thou hast seen cast from thee, O Witness.  
Turn to the Alone and the Absolute, turn to the Eternal:  
Be only eternity, peace and silence,  
O world-transcending nameless Oneness,  
Spirit immortal.

13. Free quantitative verse with a predominant dactylic movement.

## (2)

*Beyond the Silence*

Out from the Silence, out from the Silence,  
 Carrying with thee the ineffable Substance,  
 Carrying with thee the splendour and wideness,  
 Ascend, O Spirit immortal.  
 Assigning to Time its endless meaning,  
 Blissful enter into the clasp of the Timeless.  
 Awake in the living Eternal, taken to the bosom of love of the Infinite,  
 Live self-found in his endless completeness,  
 Drowned in his joy and his sweetness,  
 Thy heart close to the heart of the Godhead for ever.

Vast, God-possessing, embraced by the Wonderful,  
 Lifted by the All-Beautiful into his infinite beauty,  
 Love shall envelop thee endless and fathomless,  
 Joy unimaginable, ecstasy illimitable,  
 Knowledge omnipotent, Might omniscient,  
 Light without darkness, Truth that is dateless.  
 One with the Transcendent, calm, universal,  
 Single and free, yet innumerably living,  
 All in thyself and thyself in all dwelling,  
 Act in the world with thy being beyond it.  
 Soul, exceed life's boundaries; Spirit, surpass the universe.  
 Outclimbing the summits of Nature,  
 Transcending and uplifting the soul of the finite,  
 Rise with the world in thy bosom,  
 O Word gathered into the heart of the Ineffable.  
 One with the Eternal, live in his infinity,  
 Drowned in the Absolute, found in the Godhead,  
 Swan of the supreme and spaceless ether wandering winged through the  
 universe,  
 Spirit immortal.

## THE TIGER AND THE DEER <sup>14</sup>

Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart of the forest,  
Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of grandeur and murder?  
The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice and the noise of its steps perturb the pitiless Splendour,  
Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and crept, and crept and crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal,  
Till suddenly death leaped on the beautiful wild deer as it drank  
Unsuspecting from the great pool in the forest's coolness and shadow,  
And it fell and, torn, died remembering its mate left sole in the deep woodland,—  
Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature.  
But a day may yet come when the tiger crouches and leaps no more in the dangerous heart of the forest,  
As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia;  
Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness of great pools in the leaves' shadow.  
The mighty perish in their might;  
The slain survive the slayer.

14. Free quantitative verse, left to find out its own line by line rhythm and unity.

ILION <sup>15</sup>*Dawn over Ilion*

Dawn in her journey eternal compelling the labour of mortals,  
 Dawn the beginner of things with the night for their rest or their ending,  
 Pallid and bright-lipped arrived from the mists and the chill of the Euxine.  
 Earth in the dawn-fire delivered from starry and shadowy vastness  
 Woke to the wonder of life and its passion and sorrow and beauty,  
 All on her bosom sustaining, the patient compassionate Mother.  
 Out of the formless vision of Night with its look on things hidden  
 Given to the gaze of the azure she lay in her garment of greenness,  
 Wearing light on her brow. In the dawn-ray lofty and voiceless  
 Ida climbed with her god-haunted peaks into diamond lustres,  
 Ida first of the hills with the ranges silent beyond her  
 Watching the dawn in their giant companies, as since the ages  
 First began they had watched her, upbearing Time on their summits.  
 Troas cold on her plain awaited the boon of the sunshine.  
 There, like a hope through an emerald dream sole-pacing for ever,  
 Stealing to wideness beyond, crept Simois lame in his currents,  
 Guiding his argent thread mid the green of the reeds and the grasses.  
 Headlong, impatient of Space and its boundaries, Time and its slowness,  
 Xanthus clamoured aloud as he ran to the far-surgings waters,  
 Joining his call to the many-voiced roar of the mighty Ægean,  
 Answering Ocean's limitless cry like a whelp to its parent.  
 Forests looked up through their rifts, the ravines grew aware of their  
shadows.

Closer now gliding glimmered the golden feet of the goddess.  
 Over the hills and the headlands spreading her garment of splendour,  
 Fateful she came with her eyes impartial looking on all things,  
 Bringer to man of the day of his fortune and day of his downfall.  
 Full of her luminous errand, careless of eve and its weeping,  
 Fateful she paused unconcerned above Ilion's mystic greatness,  
 Domes like shimmering tongues of the crystal flames of the morning,  
 Opalesque rhythm-line of tower-tops, notes of the lyre of the sungod.

15. Hexameters. The poem "Ahana" included in this collection is rhymed; but the hexameter is normally rhymeless. Some opening passages of a poem left unfinished have been recast and added here to illustrate to some extent the theory of the hexameter put forward in the preceding pages.

High over all that a nation had built and its love and its laughter,  
 Lighting the last time highway and homestead, market and temple,  
 Looking on men who must die and women destined to sorrow,  
 Looking on beauty fire must lay low and the sickle of slaughter,  
 Fateful she lifted the doom-scroll red with the script of the Immortals,  
 Deep in the invisible air that folds in the race and its morrows  
 Fixed it, and passed on smiling the smile of the griefless and deathless,—  
 Dealers of death though death they know not, who in the morning  
 Scatter the seed of the event for the reaping ready at nightfall.  
 Over the brooding of plains and the age-long trance of the summits  
 Out of the sun and its spaces she came, pausing tranquil and fatal,  
 And, at a distance followed by the golden herds of the sungod,  
 Carried the burden of Light and its riddle and danger to Hellas.

### *The Coming of the Herald*

Even as fleets on a chariot divine through the gold streets of ether,  
 Swiftly when Life fleets, invisibly changing the arc of the soul-drift,  
 And, with the choice that has chanced or the fate man has called and now  
suffers

Weighted, the moment travels driving the past towards the future,  
 Only its face and its feet are seen, not the burden it carries.  
 Weight of the event and its surface we bear, but the meaning is hidden.  
 Earth sees not; life's clamour deafens the ear of the spirit:  
 Man knows not; least knows the messenger chosen for the summons.  
 Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts, his heart's ignorant whisper,  
 Whistle of winds in the tree-tops of Time and the rustle of Nature.  
 Now too the messenger hastened driving the car of the errand:  
 Even while dawn was a gleam in the east, he had cried to his coursers.  
 Half yet awake in light's turrets started the scouts of the morning  
 Hearing the jar of the wheels and the throb of the hooves' exultation,  
 Hooves of the horses of Greece as they galloped to Phrygian Troya.  
 Proudly they trampled through Xanthus thwarting the foam of his anger,  
 Whinnying high as in scorn crossed Simois' tangled currents,  
 Xanthus' reed-girdled twin, the gentle and sluggish river.  
 One and unarmed in the car was the driver; grey was he, shrunken,  
 Worn with his decades. To Pergama cinctured with strength Cyclopean  
 Old and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals,  
 Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.

Ilion, couchant, saw him arrive from the sea and the darkness.  
 Heard mid the faint slow stirrings of life in the sleep of the city,  
 Rapid there neared a running of feet, and the cry of the summons  
 Beat round the doors that guarded the domes of the splendour of Priam.  
 " Wardens charged with the night, ye who stand in Laomedon's gateway,  
 Waken the Ilian kings. Talthybius, herald of Argos,  
 Parleying stands at the portals of Troy in the grey of the dawning."  
 High and insistent the call. In the dimness and hush of his chamber  
 Charioted far in his dreams amid visions of glory and terror,  
 Scenes of a vivider world,—though blurred and deformed in the brain-  
 cells,  
 Vague and inconsequent, there full of colour and beauty and greatness,—  
 Suddenly drawn by the pull of the conscious thread of the earth-bond  
 And of the needs of Time and the travail assigned in the transience  
 Warned by his body, Deiphobus, reached in that splendid remoteness,  
 Touched through the nerve-ways of life that branch to the brain of the  
 dreamer,  
 Heard the terrestrial call and slumber startled receded  
 Sliding like dew from the mane of a lion. Reluctant he travelled  
 Back from the light of the fields beyond death, from the wonderful king-  
 doms  
 Where he had wandered a soul among souls in the countries beyond us,  
 Free from the toil and incertitude, free from the struggle and danger:  
 Now, compelled, he returned from the respite given to the time-born,  
 Called to the strife and the wounds of the earth and the burden of daylight.  
 He from the carven couch upreared his giant stature.  
 Haste-spurred he laved his eyes and regained earth's memories, haste-  
 spurred  
 Donning apparel and armour strode through the town of his fathers,  
 Watched by her gods on his way to his fate, towards Pergama's portals.

### *The Siege*

Nine long years had passed and the tenth now was wearily ending,  
 Years of the wrath of the gods, and the leaguer still threatened the  
 ramparts  
 Since through a tranquil morn the ships came past Tenedos sailing  
 And the first Argive fell slain as he leaped on the Phrygian beaches;



Still the assailants attacked, still fought back the stubborn defenders.  
 When the reward is withheld and endlessly lengthens the labour,  
 Weary of fruitless toil grows the transient heart of the mortal.  
 Weary of battle the invaders warring heartless and homeless  
 Prayed to the gods for release and return to the land of their fathers:  
 Weary of battle the Phrygians beset in their beautiful city  
 Prayed to the gods for an end of the danger and mortal encounter.  
 Long had the high-beached ships forgotten their measureless ocean.  
 Greece seemed old and strange to her children camped on the beaches,  
 Old like a life long past one remembers hardly believing  
 But as a dream that has happened, but as the tale of another.  
 Time with his tardy touch and Nature changing our substance  
 Slowly had dimmed the faces loved and the scenes once cherished:  
 Yet was the dream still dear to them longing for wife and for children,  
 Longing for hearth and glebe in the far-off valleys of Hellas.  
 Always like waves that swallow the shingles, lapsing, returning,  
 Tide of the battle, race of the onset relentlessly thundered  
 Over the Phrygian corn-fields. Trojan wrestled with Argive,  
 Caria, Lycia, Thrace and the war-lord mighty Achaia  
 Joined in the clasp of the fight. Death, panic and wounds and disaster,  
 Glory of conquest and glory of fall, and the empty hearth-side,  
 Weeping and fortitude, terror and hope and the pang of remembrance,  
 Anguish of hearts, the lives of the warriors, the strength of the nations  
 Thrown were like weights into Destiny's scales, but the balance wavered  
 Pressed by invisible hands. For not only the mortal fighters,  
 Heroes half divine whose names are like stars in remoteness,  
 Triumphed and failed and were winds or were weeds on the dance of the  
surges,

But from the peaks of Olympus and shimmering summits of Ida  
 Gleaming and clanging the gods of the antique ages descended.  
 Hidden from human knowledge the brilliant shapes of Immortals  
 Mingled unseen in the mellay, or sometimes, marvellous, maskless,  
 Forms of undying beauty and power that made tremble the heart-strings  
 Parting their deathless secrecy crossed through the borders of vision,  
 Plain as of old to the demigods out of their glory emerging,  
 Heard by mortal ears and seen by the eye-balls that perish.  
 Mighty they came from their spaces of freedom and sorrowless splendour.  
 Sea-vast, trailing the azure hem of his clamorous waters,  
 Blue-lidded, maned with the Night, Poseidon smote for the future,

Earth-shaker who with his trident releases the coils of the Dragon,  
 Freeing the forces unborn that are locked in the caverns of Nature.  
 Calm and unmoved, upholding the Word that is Fate and the order  
 Fixed in the sight of a Will foreknowing and silent and changeless,  
 Here sent by Zeus and Athene lifting his ægis  
 Guarded the hidden decree. But for Ilion, loud as the surges,  
 Ares impetuous called to the fire in men's hearts, and his passion  
 Woke in the shadowy depths the forms of the Titan and demon;  
 Dumb and coerced by the grip of the gods in the abyss of the being,  
 Formidable, veiled they sit in the grey subconscious darkness  
 Watching the sleep of the snake-haired Erinnys. Miracled, haloed,  
 Seer and magician and prophet who beholds what the thought cannot  
 witness,

Lifting the godhead within us to more than a human endeavour,  
 Slayer and saviour, thinker and mystic, leaped from his sun-peaks  
 Guarding in Ilion the wall of his mysteries Delphic Apollo.  
 Heaven's strengths divided swayed in the whirl of the Earth-force.  
 All that is born and destroyed is reborn in the sweep of the ages;  
 Life like a decimal ever recurring repeats the old figure;  
 Goal seems there none for the ball that is chased throughout Time by the  
 Fate-teams:

Evil once ended renews and no issue comes out of living:  
 Only an Eye unseen can distinguish the thread of its workings.  
 Such seemed the rule of the pastime of Fate on the plains of the Troad;  
 All went backwards and forwards tossed in the swing of the death-game.  
 Vain was the toil of the heroes, the blood of the mighty was squandered,  
 Spray as of surf on the cliffs when it moans unappeased, unrequited  
 Age after fruitless age. Day hunted the steps of the nightfall;  
 Joy succeeded to grief; defeat only greatened the vanquished,  
 Victory offered an empty delight without guerdon or profit.  
 End there was none of the effort and end there was none of the failure.  
 Triumph and agony changing hands in a desperate measure  
 Faced and turned as a man and a maiden trampling the grasses  
 Face and turn and they laugh in their joy of the dance and each other.  
 These were gods and they trampled lives. But though Time is immortal,  
 Mortal his works are and ways and the anguish ends like the rapture.  
 Artists of Nature content with their work in the plan of the transience,  
 Beautiful, deathless, august, the Olympians turned from the carnage,  
 Leaving the battle already decided, leaving the heroes

Slain in their minds, Troy burned, Greece left to her glory and downfall.  
 Into their heavens they rose up mighty like eagles ascending  
 Fanning the world with their wings. As the great to their luminous

mansions

Turn from the cry and the strife, forgetting the wounded and fallen,  
 Calm they repose from their toil and incline to the joy of the banquet,  
 Watching the feet of the wine-bearers rosily placed on the marble,  
 Filling their hearts with ease, so they to their sorrowless ether  
 Passed from the wounded earth and its air that is ploughed with men's  
 anguish;

Calm they reposed and their hearts inclined to the joy and the silence.  
 Lifted was the burden laid on our wills by their starry presence:  
 Man was restored to his smallness, the world to its inconscient labour.  
 Life felt a respite from height, the winds breathed freer delivered;  
 Light was released from their blaze and the earth was released from their  
 greatness.

But their immortal content from the struggle titanic departed.  
 Vacant the noise of the battle roared like the sea on the shingles;  
 Wearily hunted the spears their quarry; strength was disheartened;  
 Silence increased with the march of the months on the tents of the leaguer.  
 But not alone on the Achaians the steps of the moments fell heavy;  
 Slowly the shadow deepened on Ilion mighty and scornful:  
 Dragging her days went by; in the rear of the hearts of her people  
 Something that knew what they dared not know and the mind would not  
 utter,

Something that smote at her soul of defiance and beauty and laughter,  
 Darkened the hours. For Doom in her sombre and giant uprising  
 Neared, assailing the skies: the sense of her lived in all pastimes;  
 Time was pursued by unease and a terror woke in the midnight:  
 Even the ramparts felt her, stones that the gods had erected.  
 Now no longer she dallied and played, but bounded and hastened,  
 Seeing before her the end and, imagining massacre calmly,  
 Laughed and admired the flames and rejoiced in the cry of the captives.  
 Under her, dead to the watching immortals, Deiphobus hastened  
 Clanging in arms through the streets of the beautiful insolent city,  
 Brilliant, a gleaming husk but empty and left by the dæmon.  
 Even as a star long extinguished whose light still travels the spaces,  
 Seen in its form by men, but itself goes phantom-like fleeting  
 Void and null and dark through the uncaring infinite vastness,

So now he seemed to the sight that sees all things from the Real.  
 Timeless its vision of Time creates the hour by things coming.  
 Borne on a force from the past and no more by a power for the future  
 Mighty and bright was his body, but shadowy the shape of his spirit  
 Only an eidolon seemed of the being that had lived in him, fleeting  
 Vague like a phantom seen by the dim Acherontian waters.

### *The Herald*

But to the guardian towers that watched over Pergama's gateway  
 Out of the waking city Deiphobus swiftly arriving  
 Called, and swinging back the huge gates slowly, reluctant,  
 Flung Troy wide to the entering Argive. Ilion's portals  
 Parted admitting her destiny, then with a sullen and iron  
 Cry they closed. Mute, staring, grey like a wolf descended  
 Old Talthybius, propping his steps on the staff of his errand;  
 Feeble his body, but fierce still his glance with the fire within him;  
 Speechless and brooding he gazed on the hated and coveted city.  
 Suddenly, seeking heaven with her buildings hewn as for Titans,  
 Marvellous, rhythmic, a child of the gods with marble for raiment,  
 Smiting the vision with harmony, splendid and mighty and golden,  
 Ilion stood up around him entrenched in her giant defences.  
 Strength was uplifted on strength and grandeur supported by grandeur;  
 Beauty lay in her lap. Remote, hieratic and changeless,  
 Filled with her deeds and her dreams her gods looked out on the Argive,  
 Helpless and dumb with his hate as he gazed on her, they too like mortals  
 Knowing their centuries past, not knowing the morrow before them.  
 Dire were his eyes upon Troya the beautiful, his face like a doom-mask:  
 All Greece gazed in them, hated, admired, grew afraid, grew relentless.  
 But to the Greek Deiphobus cried and he turned from his passion  
 Fixing his ominous eyes with the god in them straight on the Trojan:  
 "Messenger, voice of Achaia, wherefore confronting the daybreak  
 Comest thou driving thy car from the sleep of the tents that besiege us?  
 Fateful, I deem, was the thought that, conceived in the silence of midnight,  
 Raised up thy aged limbs from the couch of their rest in the stillness,—  
 Thoughts of a mortal but forged by the Will that uses our members  
 And of its promptings our speech and our acts are the tools and the image.  
 Oft from the veil and the shadow they leap out like stars in their bright-  
 ness,

Lights that we think our own, yet they are but tokens and counters,  
 Signs of the Forces that flow through us serving a Power that is secret.  
 What in the dawning bringst thou to Troya the mighty and dateless  
 Now in the ending of Time when the gods are weary of struggle?  
 Sends Agamemnon challenge or courtesy, Greek, to the Trojans?"

High like the northwind answered the voice of the doom from Achaia:  
 "Trojan Deiphobus, daybreak, silence of night and the evening  
 Sink and arise and even the strong sun rests from his splendour.  
 Not for the servant is rest nor Time is his, only his death-pyre.  
 I have not come from the monarch of men or the armoured assembly  
 Held on the wind-swept marge of the thunder and laughter of ocean.  
 One in his singleness greater than kings and multitudes sends me.  
 I am a voice out of Phthia, I am the will of the Hellene.  
 Peace in my right I bring to you, death in my left hand. Trojan,  
 Proudly receive them, honour the gifts of the mighty Achilles.  
 Death accept, if Ate deceives you and Doom is your lover,  
 Peace if your fate can turn and the god in you chooses to hearken.  
 Full is my heart and my lips are impatient of speech undelivered.  
 It was not made for the streets or the market, nor to be uttered  
 Meantly to common ears, but where counsel and majesty harbour  
 Far from the crowd in the halls of the great and to wisdom and foresight  
 Secrecy whispers, there I will speak among Ilion's princes."

"Envoy," answered the Laomedontian, "voice of Achilles,  
 Vain is the offer of peace that sets out with a threat for its prelude.  
 Yet will we hear thee. Arise who are fleetest of foot in the gateway,—  
 Thou, Thrasymachus, haste. Let the domes of the mansion of Ilus  
 Wake to the bruit of the Hellene challenge. Summon Æneas."  
 Even as the word sank back into stillness, doffing his mantle  
 Started to run at the bidding a swift-footed youth of the Trojans  
 First in the race and the battle, Thrasymachus son of Aretes.  
 He in the dawn disappeared into swiftness. Deiphobus slowly,  
 Measuring Fate with his thoughts in the troubled vasts of his spirit,  
 Back through the stir of the city returned to the house of his fathers,  
 Taming his mighty stride to the pace infirm of the Argive.

### *Æneas*

But with the god in his feet Thrasymachus rapidly running  
 Came to the halls in the youth of the wonderful city by Ilus

Built for the joy of the eye; for he rested from war and, triumphant,  
 Reigned adored by the prostrate nations. Now when all ended,  
 Last of its mortal possessors to walk in its flowering gardens,  
 Great Anchises lay in that luminous house of the ancients  
 Soothing his restful age, the far-warring victor Anchises,  
 High Bucoleon's son and the father of Rome by a goddess;  
 Lonely and vagrant once in his boyhood divine upon Ida  
 White Aphrodite ensnared him and she loosed her ambrosial girdle  
 Seeking a mortal's love. On the threshold Thrasymachus halted  
 Looking for servant or guard, but felt only a loneliness of slumber  
 Drawing the soul's sight within away from its life and things human;  
 Soundless, unheeding, the vacant corridors fled into darkness.  
 He to the shades of the house and the dreams of the echoing rafters  
 Trusted his high-voiced call, and from chambers still dim in their twilight  
 Strong Æneas armoured and mantled, leonine striding,  
 Came, Anchises' son; for the dawn had not found him reposing,  
 But in the night he had left his couch and the clasp of Creüsa,  
 Rising from sleep at the call of his spirit that turned to the waters  
 Prompted by Fate and his mother who guided him, white Aphrodite.  
 Still with the impulse of speed Thrasymachus greeted Æneas:

"Hero Æneas, swift be thy stride to the Ilian hill-top.  
 Dardanid, haste! for the gods are at work; they have risen with the  
 morning,

Each from his starry couch, and they labour. Doom, we can see it,  
 Glows on their anvils of destiny, clang we can hear of their hammers.  
 Something they forge there sitting unknown in the silence eternal,  
 Whether of evil or good it is they who shall choose who are masters  
 Calm, unopposed; they are gods and they work out their iron caprices.  
 Troy is their stage and Argos their background; we are their puppets.  
 Always our voices are prompted to speech for an end that we know not,  
 Always we think that we drive, but are driven. Action and impulse,  
 Yearning and thought are their engines, our will is their shadow and  
 helper.

Now too, deeming he comes with a purpose framed by a mortal,  
 Shaft of their will they have shot from the bow of the Grecian leaguer,  
 Lashing themselves at his steeds, Talthylus sent by Achilles."  
 "Busy the gods are always, Thrasymachus son of Aretes,  
 Weaving Fate on their looms, and yesterday, now and tomorrow  
 Are but the stands they have made with Space and Time for their timber,

Frame but the dance of their shuttle. What eye unamazed by their  
 Ever can pierce where they dwell and uncover their far-stretching  
 Silent they toil, they are hid in the clouds, they are wrapped with the  
 midnight.

Yet to Apollo, I pray, the Archer friendly to mortals,  
 Yet to the rider on Fate I abase myself, wielder of thunder,  
 Evil and doom to avert from my fatherland. All night Morpheus,  
 He who with shadowy hands heaps error and truth upon mortals,  
 Stood at my pillow with images. Dreaming I erred like a phantom  
 Helpless in Ilion's streets with the fire and the foeman around me.  
 Red was the smoke as it mounted triumphant the house-top of Priam,  
 Clang of the arms of the Greeks was in Troya, and thwarting the clangour  
 Voices were crying and calling me over the violent Ocean  
 Borne by the winds of the West from a land where Hesperus harbours."  
 Brooding they ceased, for their thoughts grew heavy upon them and  
 voiceless.

Then, in a farewell brief and unthought and unconscious of meaning,  
 Parting they turned to their tasks and their lives now close but soon  
 severed:

Destined to perish even before his perishing nation,  
 Back to his watch at the gate sped Thrasymachus rapidly running;  
 Large of pace and swift, but with eyes absorbed and unseeing,  
 Driven like a car of the gods by the whip of his thoughts through the  
 highways,

Turned to his mighty future the hero born of a goddess.  
 One was he chosen to ascend into greatness through fall and disaster,  
 Loser of his world by the will of a heaven that seemed ruthless and adverse,  
 Founder of a newer and greater world by daring adventure.  
 Now, from the citadel's rise with the townships crowding below it  
 High towards a pondering of domes and the mystic Palladium climbing,  
 Fronted with the morning ray and joined by the winds of the ocean,  
 Fate-weighted up Troy's slope strode musing strong Æneas.  
 Under him silent the slumbering roofs of the city of Ilus  
 Dreamed in the light of the dawn; above watched the citadel, sleepless  
 Lonely and strong like a goddess white-limbed and bright on a hill-top,  
 Looking far out at the sea and the foe and the prowling of danger.  
 Over the brow he mounted and saw the palace of Priam,

Home of the gods of the earth, Laomedon's marvellous vision  
Held in the thought that accustomed his will to unearthly achievement  
And in the blaze of his spirit compelling heaven with its greatness,  
Dreamed by the harp of Apollo, a melody caught into marble.  
Out of his mind it arose like an epic canto by canto;  
Each of its halls was a strophe, its chambers lines of an epode,  
Victor chant of Ilion's destiny. Absent he entered,  
Voiceless with thought, the brilliant megaron crowded with paintings,  
Paved with a splendour of marble, and saw Deiphobus seated,  
Son of the ancient house by the opulent hearth of his fathers,  
And at his side like a shadow the grey and ominous Argive.  
Happy of light like a lustrous star when it welcomes the morning,  
Brilliant, beautiful, glamoured with gold and a fillet of gem-fire,  
Paris, plucked from the song and the lyre by the Grecian challenge,  
Came with the joy in his face and his eyes that Fate could not alter.  
Ever a child of the dawn at play near a turn of the sun-roads,  
Facing destiny's look with the careless laugh of a comrade,  
He with his vision of delight and beauty brightening the earth-field  
Passed through its peril and grief on his way to the ambiguous Shadow.  
Last from her chamber of sleep where she lay in the Ilian mansion  
Far in the heart of the house with the deep-bosomed daughters of Priam,  
Noble and tall and erect in a nimbus of youth and of glory,  
Claiming the world and life as a fief of her strength and her courage,  
Dawned through a doorway that opened to distant murmurs and laughter,  
Capturing the eye like a smile or a sunbeam, Penthesilea.





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Ed. 1: The "Lakshmi Vilas" Printing Press Co., Ltd., Baroda, n.d. (1895) pp. IV+24 Paper covers.

Ed. 2: Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, April, 1923 pp. IV+58 Cloth.

(The 1st Edition was printed for private circulation only and contained a Latin quotation from Virgil with the inscription, "To my brother Manmohan Ghose these poems are dedicated." In the 2nd Edition the title was altered as "Songs to Myrtilla." The sonnet, "To Rajnarayan Bose," which is placed along with them in this Collected Edition, first appeared in the Bengali autobiography of Rajnarayan Bose posthumously published by the Kuntaline Press, Calcutta, 1909.)

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(The poem was composed in Baroda in 1899. It was published for the first time in the Quarterly *Shama'a*,

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\*The works are here arranged according to their date of composition as far as it has been possible to ascertain, and not always in the chronological order of their publication (*vide* 'Publisher's Note').

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(Originally appeared serially in the Weekly *Karmayogin*, Vol. I, Nos. 33-35, February 19 to March 5, 1910, and was reprinted after minor revision.)

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The Shama's Publishing House, Madras, 1924 pp. VIII+134 Cloth.

(The Niti Shataka of Bhartrihari freely rendered into English verse.)

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(Originally appeared in the *Karmayogin*, Vol. I, No. 20, November 20, 1909 accompanied by a translation in prose. It was later published in the pamphlet "Rishi Bunkim Chandra," Prabartak Publishing House, Chandernagore, February 1923, under the title "Bande-mataram.")

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